Meeting the Master

Ozora S. Davis

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EVERYDAY LIFE SERIES

Meeting the Master

OZORA S. DAVIS
Author of "Using the Bible in Public Address"

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CHAPTER I

Jesus and John the Baptist

The following studies are designed to show the character of Jesus and the practical value of certain of his teachings, as these are revealed through the personal relations which the Master bore to individuals whom he met in his daily life. Character is revealed and developed in the personal reactions of common life more effectively than in any other way. Therefore one of the surest methods by which to gain an accurate idea of Jesus is to study the way in which he entered into intimate relations with those around him. Jesus moved through a real world of men and things; he was flesh and blood with his disciples and his antagonists. Each person whom he met was in some way a foil, bringing out his own purpose and character. When we see him in these collisions of thought and action, we are able to understand him.

Brief Outline Sketches are furnished with each chapter. These are such rough cartoons or preliminary drawings as an artist might make before painting a picture. A few bold strokes are indicated; the student will make his own completed study from these outlines.

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day: "The Desert Preacher"

And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying,

> **The voice of one crying in the wilderness,**
> **Make ye ready the way of the Lord,**
> **Make his paths straight.**

Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about the Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.—Matt. 3: 1-6.

John the Baptist is a challenging figure. He looms in our imagination. He lives in the desert, in his rough clothing, eating his simple food, at home with the rocks and the stars and the rugged sincerities of nature. He is no dandy from the towns, no ladies' man, showing at his best in parlors and at banquets. His skin is brown, his muscles are firm, he is not afraid of the rain.

And his message matches his external appearance. It is full of rugged sincerity, short, snappy, searching. It digs to the roots of both personal and natural problems. It throws sin into its red glare of disaster. John calls things by their right names: he does not side-step; he does not obscure the truth. He throws one burning word at his hearers: *"Repent."* He makes it an urgent matter. It cannot be put off to a convenient time; every man must square his life up to the demand of a righteous God and he must do it now.

And the message gains in dignity and grips with new power when we notice that the man has forgotten himself. He calls himself simply a Voice and a Way-maker. He, John, may be forgotten; but the great Cause is on its way. "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work." John does not make us conscious of himself; he only makes us aware of something most vital and urgent, driving forward, getting the road ready for something still greater to come.

Has John a word for us in these bustling times? Have we ever considered what it means literally to use ourselves just for building a way for the Kingdom?

First Week, Second Day: "A Personal Consecration"

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer

it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—Matt. 3: 13-17.

This was Jesus' public consecration of himself to the work which he was to do in the world. His baptism could not have involved the confession of sin and the reception of forgiveness, for which it stood in the case of the men whose conscience had been stung into response by John's message. Jesus did not hesitate to keep all the outward forms of the spiritual life, as they were observed at the time. He went regularly to the synagogue, he observed the times of prayer, he sent a man whom he had cured to the priest in proper form. Jesus was not careless or contemptuous of the forms of religion. He did not come to destroy them, but to fill them with a new life and spirit. His example gives no warrant or comfort to those who say that formal expressions of religion are unnecessary.

This experience of Jesus is similar to that through which we pass when we "join the church" or are "confirmed" or are "baptized." It is like that act by which at any time we express in a public way the purpose to give ourselves to a life of personal service to God. Jesus was ready to stand among his fellows and take upon himself a solemn consecration to a life of service to God and to his fellowmen.

Sometimes we are told that such consecrations are not necessary and, in general, hardly desirable. Of course, these experiences occasionally foster sham and cant; and the present hatred of hypocrisy is very wholesome: but surely there could be no greater moment in the life of a sincere and unselfish man than that in which he commits his life to the service of a great cause. There is nothing to be ashamed of in standing before his fellows personally to assume the highest duty and to pledge himself to the holiest of all friendship. When things go badly and work drags, it helps tremendously to remember the sacred hour of consecration. Your public acceptance of Christ as Lord has helped you: have you gained from it all that might have been possible?

First Week, Third Day: "When Men are Offered Crowns"

And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet. And they had been sent from the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize in water: in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.—John 1: 19-27.

John knew what the people were expecting their Messiah to do. Their patriotism was like tinder, waiting only for the spark of a great battle-cry and a leader, in order to break into a flame of revolution which should burn the Romans out of Palestine.

John also knew what it would cost him to fail to meet this popular demand. He must have had ambition; without it there would be no deep joy in life. But the way in which we behave when men offer us crowns is the test of the strength of the soul.

John knew, too, that the deepest needs of the nation could not be served by him, but that they must be satisfied by Jesus. While Jesus was living among them, the people did not appreciate this; nor do we fully understand it even now. But John was clear in his vision on this point. So he met the test of being offered a crown and never swerved in his loyalty to his own life purpose and to his Master.

The secret of John's steadfastness and clarity of moral vision is due to the fact that *he defined his life with reference to Jesus and His Cause.* This does not mean that he had no work of his own to do. We could not get on, unless we could have a clear idea of certain work of our own which we must do with our might. To plan our life in the light of alle-

giance to Jesus does not mean that it has no character or direction of its own. John's life took on a real significance only when he had related it to the greater mission of his Master. Precision of aim is derived from the clearness and worth of the objective. Steadiness also comes from the sense of a clear purpose. When headed toward a high end, men will not go to pieces when they are tested by the severe strain of personal ambition. Have you defined the objective of your life in reference to Christ and his purpose? Is your life really making the way ready for greater achievements by those who are to come after you?

First Week, Fourth Day: "The Index Finger"

On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!—John 1: 29.

The index finger is one of our most common and useful symbols. It points out an object to an inquirer. John the Baptist is the index finger, pointing his friends to the one object about which their love and loyalty ought to center. John did not gather a school of pupils to receive and extend his teaching; he did not write books to expound his message; he did not gather his friends into an institution which should perpetuate his work. He pointed those who followed him to Christ and he gave his testimony that Jesus was the Son of God.

This does not mean that there should be no teachers or theologians or founders of institutions today; but it does indicate the fact that the great work of any person is to be the index finger, pointing out Christ as the Saviour of the world. But just what do we mean by pointing others to Christ? In the case of John, it involved two large considerations.

First, he had himself a clear conviction based upon experience that Jesus was the Son of God, to whom the personal loyalty of His disciples was due. If he had not been sure of this he could not have spoken with such certain accent.

Second, he established warm and frank personal relations with his friends and then he told them of Jesus the Sin-Bearer. John undertook what is now commonly known as "personal evangelism."

We must revive our fundamental convictions of the reality of Christ through fresh experience with him. Then we must point out the Master to others as Saviour of the world. The experience without the service may be only a selfish spiritual joy; the service without the deepened experience may be only a formal and barren religious act. What can we do to deepen our convictions about Jesus through experience? How can we make more personal contacts with others, for the purpose of leading them to Christ?

First Week, Fifth Day: "The Rising Sun and the Waning Star"

There arose therefore a questioning on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying. And they came unto John, and said to him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but, that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease.—John 3: 25-30.

The question which John's disciples were debating with a Jew is without meaning to us today; but it was a matter of vital concern at that time. Religion consisted mainly in ceremonies. The proper way in which to accomplish purification was a burning question. So the ideas of religion change! We must seek for the truth that lies beneath the discarded words and forms of the past. The right relation of the soul to God is still supremely important; we do not think that it can be determined simply by a ceremony. It is life that counts.

As the sun rises in the morning, the stars disappear in the brighter light. John rose like a brilliant morning star; his radiance fell upon a bewildered and somber world. Then came the growing sunlight from the life and words of Jesus. John retreated into obscurity, and Jesus advanced into the favor of the people. He increased; John decreased.

How could there be a more biting test of the pure metal

of a man's life than this? If there had been the least envy or jealousy in John's character, it would have come to the front at this time. But John was great enough to see another leader assume control of the cause that he loved, and not permit his heart to harbor the least envy. Sometimes it takes more real devotion to surrender personal leadership to another than it would to make almost any sacrifice in the position of command.

Think of the causes in which you are interested. How ready are you to surrender leadership and put your pride in your pocket? When the time comes for you to resign the presidency, are you willing to work with the same zeal on a committee? Have you swept the last shred of envy out of the chambers of your soul?

First Week, Sixth Day: "What Ye Hear and See"

Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.—Matt. 11: 2-6.

Here is John in prison, kept there unjustly, waiting for trial, for almost certain death, and eager for news of the Cause. A few rumors, often conflicting and always meager, sift in through the door of his dungeon. One says that the people are becoming convinced that Jesus is the great expected Leader; another dashes John's kindling hopes by reporting that none except a few fishermen have followed him and that he is discredited by all the officials in the church. One day it is said within John's hearing that Jesus of Nazareth is healing all kinds of disease and that all the signs point toward his fulfilment of the promises concerning the Messiah; the next day there is a report that opposition is growing and that the Jerusalem authorities are likely to take vigorous action against Jesus soon.

And meantime John feels that he must know the truth. He has pointed out Jesus as the Messiah. Was he mistaken? Is

his whole life a failure? Or does he need only to wait and be patient until the truth is finally known? "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Anything can be borne more easily than uncertainty.

So John sends on his disciples to find out the truth. It is John's question that they ask. We can almost hear its trembling eagerness. It calls for an immediate and positive reply.

Was the answer satisfactory to John? And does the beatitude really mean something to us?

First Week, Seventh Day: "Greater than the Greatest"

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.—Matt. 11: 11.

At first glance the meaning of Jesus' tribute to John is not wholly clear. The first clause is plain enough. Jesus says explicitly that no man ever has lived who is greater than John. This refers, of course, to the nobility of his character and the real worth of the work that John did. Is this true?

The work of Moses seems incomparably greater. In the spiritual history of mankind certainly the character of the great, first man of faith, Abraham, seems more significant. But the work of all religious leaders must be tested with reference to its relation to Christ; and John had the privilege of being the immediate announcer of Jesus as the Christ. In this respect, therefore, he was the greatest of men who lived before Him. And the self-forgetfulness and courage that we have noted in him also make John a great soul.

But Jesus adds the statement that the humblest member of the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. In what respect is this true? John was like all those who lived before him in that he did not have the privilege of knowing the Father in the light of the revelation which Jesus gave us. He did not have the joy of seeing defined in the life of Jesus the characteristics of that highest human life which is set before us there as our goal. And John never had the opportunity of coming into contact with the creative energies which make

the soul new through faith in a divine Redeemer. So it is true that the lowliest member of the kingdom that Christ established is greater than the greatest of the men who lived under the covenant of law and ceremonies. *Have we ever compared our privileges as Christians with those of even the most favored and strongest souls before Christ came into the world?*

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

The character of John is clearly outlined in the passages which we have studied, although they are not given to details. The Master's Way-maker is a free spirit, living near to nature and yet knowing the moral conditions of the time. He has a strong body behind him; he has not broken the edge of his manhood by early vice. We get the sense of the fundamental human traits of courage and strength from the first look at him; fuller acquaintance strengthens the impression.

John is fearless and practical in his public message and his personal interviews. In an age of subtle arguments and hair-splitting he tells the truth in plain terms. So he wins the respect of men, even when he cuts to the quick in dealing with their sins. No ethical leader can be effective unless he is as frank and fearless as John. In the end even his enemies honor him for his fearlessness. Note that John's honesty never took the form of denunciation in a negative spirit. He revealed their sins to men, in order that he might help them to be rid of them.

The worthy causes that have been wrecked by the struggle for personal leadership litter the path of human progress. Individual ambition appears again and again at the critical moment in a conflict between good and evil, and the right cause is lost because a man could not subordinate his personal desires to his ideal. How big John looks from this distance! He is ready to be forgotten, if only the great movement which he has ushered in may go on to success. With the centuries to give us perspective, it seems that this ought to have been a surrender relatively easy to make. But John had no such advantage in reaching his decision. He made the great surrender with no knowledge of its results to help him. It was a glorious surrender of personal prestige.

The only reason why John was able to give up his personal leadership with such serene faith was because he had put

the Coming One at the very center of all his conscious activity. He did not think or plan or act in reference to himself. This Jesus who was to save mankind was the supreme fact in all his estimates of responsibility and duty. It is not using mere formal religious terms when we describe John as a "wholly consecrated" man. Our ideas of consecration have gathered too much around public oral expressions of purpose. But John did the real thing. He did not talk about it; he went straight to work and did it. His consecration was not an act to be boasted of. It was quiet and thorough. But it is the supreme glory of his life.

Then one day down to the shore comes a carpenter from the village of Nazareth. The two face each other. How the depths of Jesus' soul must have responded to the heroic figure and stirring message of the great Way-maker! Two plain men, as the world judges, faced each other: the one proclaimed the promise of a world's redemption, the other brought in his hands the fulfilment. John caught up in himself the best of his race, he embodied the burning desire for truth and righteousness of its greatest heroes; and Jesus, we believe, gladly and proudly received from his Forerunner the commission to go forward to realize all that John had thought or dreamed.

With what quiet majesty Jesus steps forth to give himself up in an act of public dedication to a life of unselfish service! No stir was made in Jerusalem the day the young Teacher from Nazareth came to the Jordan to devote himself to his Father in heaven. He was thoroughly his own master. He announced no program; he made no claims. But the universe itself felt the significance of his decision that day. A new base line was run from which we may survey the moral and spiritual world with confidence. It is an example of the fact that the greatest forces are not noisy.

Then also began a new era of gladness in human life. The figure of the bridegroom, with whom his friends rejoice, is one of the most accurate descriptions of Jesus that we have. Jesus is the creator of the deepest joy that we ever can know. Nothing does Jesus greater injustice than to represent him as renouncing gloomily all that makes life glad or calling upon his disciples to do so. The passing amusement and the foolish jest are never associated with Jesus; but he was at home with all wholesome human joys, at weddings and banquets,

with the crowd and among his friends. Art has put a halo around his head; but no nimbus separated him from the happy life of his human comrades.

At the very outset, however, the names that Jesus accepts as his due are the most sacred that could be given him. He is the Lamb of God and the Son of God. He is wholly one with his associates in daily life; but he is also apart from them in the majesty of his nature and the divine quality of his character. The supreme titles were not given to Jesus at the close of his career alone, but also, with great distinctness and full realization of their meaning, at the beginning of his public life. We cannot get our ideas of Jesus correctly defined unless we start with the testimony of John. Undoubtedly both John and Jesus grew into deeper appreciation of what the words Son of God meant as the months passed by; but they started with this fundamental idea clearly in their minds. There was only one spiritual leader in all history entitled to bear these names.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. Who were the forerunners of Luther and Lincoln? What was their share in the careers of these men?

2. How would you put into words that would be understood today the idea of John when he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"?

3. Can you enumerate the spiritual privileges that we possess because Christ came into the world? How can we realize these more fully in our everyday life?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. A free spirit, living near to nature, yet knowing the moral conditions of the time.

2. Fearlessly preaching righteousness, preparing men to receive and follow Christ as Master.

3. Ready to yield his personal leadership when the greater Leader should appear and the cause demand it.

4. Defining his whole life and work in reference to Jesus.

5. Dying at last because of his moral loyalty and fearlessness.

JESUS

1. Consecrating himself publicly to the life work that he had chosen.
2. Worthy to be pointed out as the Lamb of God and to be revered and followed as a personal Master.
3. A Leader and Comrade in whose presence one feels happy and strong, like friends around a bridegroom.
4. The Helper and Healer of the people in all their varying needs.

CHAPTER II

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

DAILY READINGS

Second Week, First Day: "A Courteous Request"

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria. So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.—John 4: 1-8.

The report that Jesus was making more disciples than John was spreading among the people. When the Master learned of this he started for Galilee. He was unwilling to have any such apparent conflict between himself and John. Note this fine exhibition of sensitiveness and loyalty.

When he and his disciples came near Sychar it was noon, intensely hot, and the disciples left Jesus near Jacob's well, where undoubtedly there was shade and a place to rest, while they went up to the village to buy what was necessary for their simple meal. How does this show the instinctive courtesy and respect of the disciples in their personal treatment of the Master? A true son of his own race, Jesus must have been stirred by thoughts of the great heroes of his nation, as he sat by the well where of old Jacob used to water his flocks.

When Jesus saw the woman he asked her quietly and courteously for a drink. This was entirely in accord with the

customs of the time, although it was unusual for a man to talk with a woman alone. The picture that we get of Jesus here is that of a natural, simple, and gracious man, to whom his friends yield the respect that is given spontaneously to one whose worth is self-evident. He is weary, thirsty, and sincere in his craving for a drink of water.

But was there not something deeper in his mind as he put forward his courteous request? Did he not see in this meeting with the woman an opportunity to render a service to her deeper, spiritual needs?

Second Week, Second Day, "The Flame of Race Hatred"

The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?—John 4: 9-12.

The moment Jesus spoke the sentence the quick ear of the woman detected his "brogue." He was a Jew. For generations Jews and Samaritans had hated each other. They called each other hard names; they spat in each other's faces at the slightest provocation. The sound of the hated dialect stirred her into rage. Of course, this was not personal. He never had injured her; so far as we know they never had met before. Yet her people hated his people, and that was enough. How does this temper enter into our daily life now? Are we tempted to criticize or disparage individuals simply on the ground of their race or color?

Suppose, now, that Jesus had returned hate for hate and had "answered back"! Suppose he had accepted the challenge and proceeded to discuss the superiority of the Jews and the inferiority of the Samaritans! On whose level would the interview have proceeded?

Jesus must arrest her attention, get a point of contact, create interest in what he has to say. Therefore he uses the appeal beginning: "If thou knewest the gift of God." Catch the suggestion of mystery and wonder in this; note the approach to the woman's mind by the path of native curiosity. What hint as to Jesus' skill in teaching does this give?

Second Week, Third Day: "The Water of Life"

Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.—John 4: 13-15.

Jesus wanted to talk with the woman about ruling motives and the eternal principles which should guide us in our everyday life. Therefore he used the figure of a never-failing spring of water, which is even more dependable and useful than a well.

But the woman did not catch the faintest glimmer of what Jesus meant. All she could think of was a running spring in her yard in the village, which would give her a "corner" on the water supply and make her the leading woman in the community.

As the woman earnestly asks Jesus to give her the material blessing which would completely alter her economic situation, she uses a phrase which reveals the monotonous character of her hard life. In the words, "come all the way hither to draw," one can almost see a reflection of the hot path leading down from the village, with the heat waves fairly shimmering up from it as it lay in the blazing sunshine of noon. Over it she had come and gone so many times with hot feet and aching shoulder! It stood for the daily round of drudgery, against which the idea of a cool, bubbling spring seemed a benediction indeed.

So the woman's mind was filled with material ideas alone; the pressure of the physical had nearly crowded out all else. Someone has said that almost everyone today thinks of simply two ideas—the day's job and the night's amusement. How

accurately does this describe the modern situation? And what is the danger of material-mindedness on the part of community leaders?

Therefore Jesus confronts another phase of his problem as he seeks to lead the woman to the point where she can understand a spiritual truth. He must somehow break through the surface of her life, hardened by drudgery and ill-will, so that she can appreciate the new purposes and power which he desires to bring to her.

Second Week, Fourth Day: "A White Lie"

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.—John 4: 16-18.

Jesus now proceeds to break up the soil of the woman's life by driving straight through her mind and conscience the plow of an uprooting and smashing moral question. The trouble with the woman was not simply her materialism and commercial ideas. It was her low ethical standard and faulty moral practice. *Her soul was impure; that is why she could not understand Jesus.* She could not appreciate or appropriate a spiritual ideal until she cleaned up her life. Note how John preached the stern message of repentance before he pointed men to Christ. It is the pure in heart who see God. Repeatedly it appears that men are not kept away from Christ because of their doubt or misunderstanding; it is their low moral standard and practice that is in the way.

The purpose of Jesus' sudden change of the subject is clear. He turns the white light upon her moral standard. Then she did a foolish thing, although it was most natural for a person of her type. She made a statement which could be defended as technically true, but which was essentially false and deliberately intended to deceive. Thus she put herself into the Master's hands. One white lie always calls for defense by another which is sure to be a little blacker, until exposure is finally inevitable.

Do you discover a shade of sarcasm in the way in which Jesus exposes her falsehood, saying, "in that saidst thou

truly"? The woman is now caught in the web of her own falsehood. There is no other deceitful statement that she can offer. How much sympathy does she deserve?

Second Week, Fifth Day: "Obscuring the Issue but Finding the Truth"

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.—John 4: 19-26.

The woman discloses her cleverness at this point. She must either surrender herself to the situation in which she has involved herself, or she must turn the subject in some way. She instantly decides to obscure the issue by involving Jesus in an old, fruitless religious discussion. For generations the Jews and Samaritans had debated the question of the place where true worship must be carried on. They had spilt the thin white blood of religious debate and had arrived nowhere, as is inevitably the case in such controversies. Here was a chance to throw dust in the air and get rid of the subject.

So she tried to impale him on the horn of a dilemma. He met it with consummate skill. Instead of accepting the dilemma and saying that God must be worshipped *either* in Jerusalem *or* in Gerizim, he gave her a reply that was big enough to include both. Such an answer disarmed opposition and made discussion impossible.

And now the woman could not help responding to the friendly and positive leadership of Jesus. She saw that here

was a man whom she could trust. And she was hungry for truth; she was eager about the coming Christ. No one in the village had suspected this. Perhaps she never would have revealed her yearnings if she had not met someone like Jesus.

So to the woman Jesus now affirms without hesitation or reserve that he is the Messiah for whom she had hoped and for whom the world was waiting. This is the great truth of the Incarnation, that God has expressed himself in the terms of a human life, in order that men may understand what he is and what they ought to be. *Have we seen God in the life and character of Jesus Christ?*

Second Week, Sixth Day: "The Enthusiastic Witness"

And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her? So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ? They went out of the city, and were coming to him.—John 4: 27-30.

It is interesting to note the significance of the water jar the woman left at the side of the well, as she hurried up to the village to tell the people what she had found. That water jar stands for the old task which has been left behind for a moment under the inspiration of the new vision of truth. The woman will come back to the well some time. She will take up the jar again. She will carry her burden as she formerly did. But she will carry it with a new spirit. Under it there will be the inspiration and strength of a new hope and a new vision. She has laid down the burdensome work of the moment, in order that it may be resumed by and by in a new way. How does the mastery of a great truth help us in doing our daily work?

The verse that describes the woman's arrival in the village is full of vivid touches. In the joy of the great discovery, she rushes around among the people and tells them that there is a man out at the well who has told her everything that ever she did. So far as we have a record of the conversation,

Jesus had told her only a small part of the things which she had done. But to her the discovery was so great and the revelation so satisfying that she put it in these over-enthusiastic terms. In what way does Christ reveal us to ourselves? Note how she put the matter before the villagers whom she found, like true Orientals, not especially busy, and ready to hear any item of gossip or information. Do you think she asked the question, "Can this be the Christ?" in order to start discussion on the problem; or, having settled the matter in her own conviction, did she put the matter in the form of a question as the most adroit way of arousing the interest of the people?

Second Week, Seventh Day: "Christ His Own Proof"

And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did. So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word; and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.—John 4: 39-42.

Race prejudice faded from the minds of the villagers as it had from the heart of the woman, when Jesus met them face to face. Many believed in him, not because they had heard the woman's testimony, but because they had come into personal relations with Jesus.

Note, however, the necessity of the woman's work as a witness. Unless she had gone to the village and told her story, the people would not have met Jesus. She was responsible for bringing her neighbors into immediate contact with the Master. The result of that relationship might safely be left with Jesus himself. As it has often been put: she was responsible for contact, not for conversion.

The result of Jesus' visit to the village was inevitable. Many believed because they were convinced by personal experience. This is the court of final appeal in the matter of Christian decision. Christ produced faith in himself as a result of personal relationship to him. Whenever men,

women, and children met Jesus with an open mind and responded fairly to his friendship, they believed in his claim and he became in truth their Saviour. To know him in physical presence is, of course, possible no longer. But the principle is unchanged. Spiritual friendship with Christ inevitably results in personal loyalty to him. The only effective way in which to convince men of Christ is to bring them to accept his invitation to become his friends. The moment anyone begins this relation of friendship with Christ by living in his spirit and acting from his motives, he begins to discover the divine character of his Master. He goes on adding items of certainty until at length he is certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. The only complete proof of Christ's claims is experience of Christ himself.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

In this story we find Jesus after a hard journey resting at noon beside Jacob's well in the Samaritan country. He is tired with the long walk, needing nothing so much as relaxation, complete peace for mind and body. As has been suggested, he may have found some of that peace in quiet thoughts about his great ancestor, Jacob, the fighting and sinning but tremendously human patriarch whose striving for God won him the glory of giving his name to the whole Hebrew race—the children of Israel.

Then suddenly a mere accident of the road confronts him with an alien; of no particular standing and immoral in life, one certainly who lived by bread alone, she was hardly an ideal companion for that noon-day hour. We cannot imagine that Jesus would have chosen such a meeting on the basis of mere pleasure.

But the Master gathers his weary forces together. Here is a human problem. He must give his best to her. She must not find him weary or unwilling at any cost of personal comfort to teach her such truth as her soul needs.

First of all, she was a Samaritan. The writer of the story simply says, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." The races were enough alike to double the normal hatred between diverse clans. Somehow or other he must break down

the barrier. His whole bearing must have expressed the very finest courtesy, and he strove to roll back the prejudices of generations and to meet the woman face to face.

Of course he knew that he was dealing with a thoroughgoing materialist—she could not otherwise have lived the life she did. So he began with her thought, her material way of looking at things, and drew her on thence to the things of the spirit.

Then Jesus was obliged to meet the craftiness of her clever mind, as she sought to involve him in a fruitless doctrinal discussion and thus obscure the moral issue which had been raised by him and which she was eager to avoid. But again he was not diverted from the straight course that he was pursuing as he sought to lead her into the truth.

Thus Jesus vindicated again his right to the name Teacher. He had wonderful power with men as a guide into truth. His sense of his own authority was constant; but he did not force truth upon unwilling minds. He felt sure of his own ground; but he did not compel anyone to stand where he did until they should have had time to find their way surely and gradually to his position.

But the most wonderful thing about this whole story is not *that* he led the woman forward, but *how* he led her. She was an unpromising subject, but he did not offer her half a loaf. He called to her dull spiritual senses to respond to three of the noblest ideas in religion. She could not come up to his standard in a moment, of course; but he was not willing to leave her with some "just as good"—the best, and that alone, he would hold before her then and there.

Jesus taught the woman the truth that *religion does not consist in ceremonies*, but is an inner life that inspires outward behavior. The words that seem best to describe the religious ideas of the woman are *external* and *material*. The correct places and the right forms of worship are uppermost in her mind. When Jesus has ceased talking with her, she has at least caught the vision of a religion based in the reality of experience, whose essential content is spiritual relationship between persons. This is a great discovery. When we are fully confident that the essential factors in religion are spiritual verities rather than external acts the basis of a true faith is laid.

Thus if true religion is an inner life, true worship is a

spiritual service. This also was a revelation to the woman. She had thought only of the arguments that were commonly used to show that the only place where men might find God was on her own holy mountain, and in His own especial temple. At first glance it seems like a most easy and reasonable thing to think in terms of another race or creed. But it is most difficult. Dan Crawford entitled one of the great missionary books of the generation, "Thinking Black." By this he meant to show that one has to think in the terms of the negro in order to understand Africa. The woman could think only Samaritan. Jesus knew how to think more than Galilean. He taught her to look at a larger world. And thus she learned that the real meaning of worship is spiritual fellowship. It does not depend upon buildings and altars. It consists in spiritual union with God.

And the last great truth that Jesus disclosed to the woman was that he himself was *the revelation of God and the Saviour of the world.* Never lose sight of the fact that the records make Jesus claim that he was the divine Redeemer of the world and that his most intimate friends believed that he had established this claim. This has been a subject for discussion through the centuries, but the men who lived closest to him were convinced, so that they were ready to die in witnessing that Jesus was the Christ who should bring in the new age of love and good-will.

And Jesus convinced those who knew him best that this was true, by living among them with such compelling power that they could not fail to yield their doubts, if they had any, to the proof of his words and character. He did not argue about it; he did not try to establish his claim by rules of evidence. He simply lived among them; and the argument from his perfect life was invincible. For once a man appeared on earth, between whose highest claims and whose daily life there were no inconsistencies. So the world was bound to believe, when once it gave the evidence fair consideration. And not the least of his personal victories was this capture of the soul of the woman at noon by the well.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How large a place has race hatred in the forces that

govern our modern life? Give specific examples from America; how can we aid in solving the problems thus created?

2. Suggest ways in which a point of contact may be established in trying to present the claim of Christ to:

a. a high school boy;

b. a young woman, stenographer in a city office;

c. a busy business man;

d. a college senior, inclined to be skeptical.

3. How can physical and material symbols be profitably used in the practice of the religious life; for example, the formal words of the Lord's Prayer, the church edifice, the elements in the sacraments?

4. How does an immoral life tend to obscure spiritual vision? What are some of the essential connections between religion and morality?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

1. Scornful, sarcastic, and materialistic in temper.

2. Living an immoral life; trying to lie out of a moral difficulty when trapped.

3. Clever in her effort to divert Jesus into a useless argument.

4. Longing to know the truth, even when leading a hard life.

5. Becoming an enthusiastic and successful witness for the truth when once she had discovered it.

JESUS

1. So self-controlled that he did not return sarcasm or scorn in kind.

2. Discovering and leading forth the best in the woman's soul.

3. Patiently and tactfully guiding the woman's mind until she could understand the truth.

4. Giving positive and comprehensive answers to questions.

5. Declaring himself to be the Christ of God.

6. Himself producing final conviction concerning his own claims.

CHAPTER III

Jesus and Matthew

DAILY READINGS

Third Week, First Day: "A Balanced Life"

And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. . . . And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.—Mark 2: 13; 6: 45-47.

We may always be sure that, under normal conditions, Jesus will be with the people. He was not content simply to have a little group of friends around him; but wherever men met for the transaction of their daily business, Jesus was likely to be found among them. Capernaum was a busy town, and the fishing industry was highly developed. Around the wharves and where the small taxes were levied, there would always be found many people. When we think of Jesus' "preaching," we never associate it with a church or an order of service. It was not *preaching* in the modern sense of the word, that is, delivering a formal discourse as a part of public worship. The better word for it is *teaching*. Jesus went where the people were and talked with them simply about their relations to God and to one another. He made the religious life a part of daily conduct, and he brought God so near that He can be felt as a personal presence in everyday living. There must have been opportunity for question and answer in this informal relation between Jesus and the people who heard him gladly. It was the natural association

of friends, rather than the official connection of priests and scribes that marked the work of Jesus as teacher.

But the Master's intimate connection with the people did not so absorb him that he found no time to replenish the springs of his life by prayer and quietness. He worked this problem out with fine skill. He made a place for the "retreat to fructifying silence," when the pressure became so intense that he could not endure it without exhaustion. Jesus knew that there must be a time when the bow is unbent, in order that its resilience may not be lost. Jesus planned his day's work and ordered his life in such a way that spiritual overstrain and physical exhaustion did not get the mastery of him. The practical meaning of this fact in the life of the average overworked American cannot be emphasized too strongly. Our interests are so many and so confusing that we lose both serenity and power. Jesus did more in three short years than most men do in ten, because he found the right adjustment between his contacts with men and his relationships with God.

Third Week, Second Day: "Matthew at the Toll Booth"

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the place of toll.—Mark 2: 14.

The name Matthew is recorded in Matt. 9: 9. The system of taxation in the time of Jesus was open to abominable abuses. The taxes were "farmed out" and a publican was hated without reserve as a result of the system. The common association of the words "publicans and sinners" shows how the office filled by Matthew was popularly regarded.

The immediate way in which Matthew responded to the call of Jesus leads us to imagine the preparation that had been made for it. The toll booth or tax collector's office was naturally located near the shore of the lake, where the petty taxes on fish could be laid and collected. Undoubtedly the subjects about which Jesus habitually talked with men would be discussed quite openly around the booth where Matthew must have heard them, and doubtless he bore his part in the discussion.

Probably the day on which Matthew faced the great decis-

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ion in his life had dawned like any other in his daily work. Undoubtedly he had met the same irritating problems; it may be that he had been criticized and possibly scorned in the same way in which he had many times tasted the contempt of his people. If he had known that it was going to be the most significant hour in his life, undoubtedly he would have made great preparation for it. He probably would have observed it by some special religious act. As it was, however, the day of his decision was like other days, and he was found at his task doing his ordinary work when the Master called him. Looking back over your own life, is not this also true in your experience? The supreme force that has come quietly into your life came at a moment when you did not expect it. Perhaps it was something that you heard in a lecture or a sermon. It may have been the silent personal influence of some one whose character you honored, and whose love you were anxious to possess. It may have come to you at the close of a day or in the midst of a task when your mind was particularly sensitive to the appeals of the ideal and of duty. In some way or other it came, and it found you as it found Matthew doing the ordinary work of the day. Can we not make every task and every hour a time of preparation for the deeper knowledge of God's will for us? Is it not possible to study, to work, and even to play, hallowing everything we do by a high and noble intention, so that we shall be ready to hear Christ when he calls us to our supreme consecration?

Third Week, Third Day: "The Call and the Consecration"

And said unto him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him.—Luke 5: 27, 28.

If Matthew had been thinking of the personal claim of Jesus upon his life, it must have been the earnest, hard-headed thinking of a business man. Using your imagination, write out or state the way in which a practical man like Matthew must have summed up the claim of Jesus upon his personal allegiance and service. Does this throw any light upon the way in which Christ might be presented as an object of love and friendship to a modern business man?

Two words call for attention in the passage. The first is "forsook." At first glance this seems to be the important term. His official position, his salary, his daily duty—all these were left suddenly and completely behind in response to the imperative call of Jesus. This was taking radical action. All the bridges were burned. It looks like renunciation of the most thorough-going kind. But this is not all. The significant matter is not what Matthew leaves behind, but what he is called to enter into. Let us not miss the significance of the word "follow." Matthew was not asked to define his intellectual attitude toward Jesus as the Christ; but he was asked to take upon himself a personal relationship, to enter into allegiance to Jesus as his Master, and to change not only the spirit but also the task of his daily life. To some of us there may be a similar call to enter into a different kind of service from that which is engaging us now. To the majority, however, the call of Christ is to a doing of the old work in a new way. It will be like the life of the Woman of Samaria, who undoubtedly still carried the water from the well to the village, but who had no longer a heavy heart beneath the burden, but went to and fro with a singing life.

Third Week, Fourth Day: "The Friend of Publicans and Sinners"

And Levi made him a great feast in his house: and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.—Luke 5: 29-32.

Feasts occupied a large place in the expression of Oriental hospitality. Naturally those who were invited were chosen because of some sufficient reason on the part of the host. Jesus was a frequent guest at these banquets. What aspect of his character is revealed by this fact? If he were gloomy and a "kill-joy," would he have been invited as he was?

The trouble that arose at Matthew's feast came from the

Pharisees, who were bitter in their criticism of the Master to his disciples. Evidently we have only an abbreviated account of the matter; but the discussion came to the ears of Jesus, and he replied himself to the criticism.

The contemptuous Pharisees could not imagine how any one who had any claim to be the Christ could also be the friend of the religious outcasts and the spiritually despised. Remember that the word "sinners" as used in the gospels does not necessarily mean men of immoral life. Sinners were those who did not keep the ceremonies or perform the stated ritual required by the religious leaders of the time. To the Pharisee it was a far greater fault to transgress one of the traditions of the elders or to fail to keep a prescribed ceremony than it was to be a person of flagrantly immoral life. Their criticism of Jesus was not that he loved to associate with debauched or vulgar men, but rather that he made friends with those who had not conformed to the superficial religious standards of the time.

To love personal contacts with debased men is not the sign of a noble soul, except as one sees that through such relations good may be done. Sin must be repulsive to a healthy, clean soul. To discover the good in those whom men for superficial reasons despise is the mark of greatness. We like to think of Jesus as the friend of those who were outcasts in the minds of the Pharisees. It has become a title of nobility with him. What modern parallels suggest themselves to your mind as you think of Jesus in his association with men like Matthew and Zacchæus?

Third Week, Fifth Day: "The Joy of Being the Master's Friend"

And they said unto him, The disciples of John fast often, and make supplications; likewise also the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink. And Jesus said unto them, Can ye make the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then will they fast in those days.—Luke 5: 33-35.

Here we have two conceptions of religion that always are to be found. On the one side is fasting and prayer, the long

list of dismal exercises and painful experiences, in which many men seem to think that religion must find its expression. On the other hand are the kind and happy human relationships for which the words "eating and drinking" stand. This healthy fellowship and wholesome joy have been assigned to the worldly spirit. Renunciation and sacrifice have been associated with religion. But Jesus simply reversed all this. He insisted that religion had a place among the table joys of men. He was not willing to give all the good times to evil and grant all misery and limitations to the good. Jesus evidently meant that his friends should be happy and share their good world of wholesome joy.

This was true as regards his own association with his disciples and acquaintances. Art has given us the familiar figure of the "Man of Sorrows." But the report of his daily relations with men is not in accord with it.

While his life is full of seriousness and the solemnity that comes from constant contact with the great truths of life, nevertheless the relationship between himself and his friends was marked by wholesome, healthy, human joy. It is time for us to recover this conception which appears in the incident at Matthew's feast. Perhaps he spoke these words with Matthew especially in mind. The tax gatherer had been a busy business man, and must have known the joy of hard work and the reaction of human friendship. Jesus wanted to show him that he was not going into an ascetic and gloomy life. Therefore he compared himself to the bridegroom, and his friend to the friend of the bridegroom during an Oriental marriage festival. The supreme characteristic of these glad times in the life of the East is the joy to which everyone yields. A depressed and melancholy friend of the bridegroom was unthinkable. Let us propose this as one of the tests of the Christian life. Your new relation with Christ has brought you the deepest joy that ever you have experienced. *How does your daily life measure up to that test?*

Third Week, Sixth Day: "Expressing the Truth"

And he spake also a parable unto them: No man rendeth a piece from a new garment and putteth it upon an old garment; else he will rend the new, and also the piece from the new will not agree with the old. And no man

putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the new wine will burst the skins, and itself will be spilled, and the skins will perish. But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. And no man having drunk old wine desireth new; for he saith, The old is good.—Luke 5: 36-39.

Jesus uses three figures to explain the principle that truth must be expressed in the terms that are understood by the age for which the truth is intended. They were clear to his hearers.

Cloth must be shrunken or fulled before it can keep its form. If therefore a patch is to be put upon an old and shrunken garment, it also must be of fulled or shrunken cloth. Otherwise the patch itself would shrink, and the rent be made all the worse. To the men to whom Jesus was speaking, this would be an almost perfect example of the way in which truth must be adapted to the time in which it is spoken and the conditions which it is meant to meet and help.

The second figure is more apparent. Wine was put into skins, and the pressure of fermentation could not be successfully resisted by old skins that had been weakened by age and use. So the truth that is to fit the time must be expressed in new forms adapted to the age.

The third item is found only in Luke and its significance grows out of what immediately precedes it. The patch and the new wine-skin indicate novelty and change; the old wine suggests the worth of that which is old and approved. Jesus put the two truths together in Matt. 13: 52: "Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

So Jesus was neither the dashing radical nor the staunch conservative. He was the happy union of both. He evidently wanted to assure Matthew on this point. This aggressive publican was in danger of throwing everything old on the scrap-heap and rushing into a new campaign of efficiency. Jesus laid his strong hand on his arm and steadied him by this story. He wanted Matthew to understand that he did not need to be afraid of the future and its new experiences, so long as there was continuous and creative life behind the change. What does this mean for us?

Third Week, Seventh Day: "Publican and Christian Standards of Life"

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?—Matt. 5: 43-47.

While the so-called Sermon on the Mount is recorded in its fullest form in our present gospel according to Matthew, it is quite certain that it is made up of sayings and talks that were given at different times and doubtless often repeated. It is altogether possible that the significant passage for today might have been impressed upon the mind of Matthew with peculiar force as he heard it from the lips of Jesus near the toll booth. Certainly it reflects his own conception of the difference between the standards of the publican and the Christian as he experienced both.

Surely no man understood better than Matthew the standards of Gentile and publican morality. He knew that it was easy for any man to love those who loved him, and he understood how the common courtesies of life would always be extended to those who rendered them in return. But he saw also that the Christian ideal and standard went far beyond these. To love those who do not love us, and to be courteous to those who are not kind to us, demands a wholly different power on the part of any man. Matthew had learned that there was only one way in which to reach this high plane of noble and unselfish action. He must have his own motives mastered and controlled by the mighty purposes of Jesus Christ. Only when he repeated in his own daily relationships that self-sacrificing chivalry which Jesus manifested could he be counted truly a disciple of Christ. It is sometimes said that the Christian ideal is impossible. Does it seem so to you? Granted that there are relatively few who attain to even a reasonable degree of conformity to the standards

of Christ, is it not better to have such an ideal before one to strive towards than to be satisfied with anything less?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

This man Matthew is a busy practical business man, a fine type of the modern layman, efficient and successful. He gets results and he commands situations. He meets the stress of competition and endures the criticism and opposition that arise inevitably in the business world. The performance of routine duties, however, did not keep him from doing his own vigorous thinking concerning the subjects that were discussed around his business office. The man who thought that Matthew was interested only in gathering the taxes and getting the largest possible rake-off for himself did not understand this publican at all. When he went home at night he thought over a discussion that he had heard during the day between the Pharisees and a young rabbi named Jesus. The genuineness and simplicity of the teacher made a deep impression upon him and he could not shake off the feeling that perhaps here was indeed a leader worthy of his allegiance.

The result of such reflections appeared in a sudden decision that Matthew made one day, when he was at work as usual. He was not the kind of a man who did things by halves. It took a man of positive character to collect taxes anyway. The scribes might be adepts at covering up their meaning with many and confusing terms; but Matthew was not that sort. For him a decision meant to be clear and definite. Mr. Moody used to express his admiration for men who were worthy of the degree "O. O." which stood for "Out and Out." Matthew could have been given that degree most consistently. When he had decided what he was going to do with his life, he was willing that all the Capernaum people should know about it. He had nothing to cover up and everything to reveal. This open championship of the man and the cause that he had espoused wins for him our admiration. He has the courage of John.

It must have been an interesting event when the news went around that Matthew the publican had invited his friends to a banquet in honor of Jesus. The Pharisees held up their hands in horror. Here was a man for whom some were already claiming the title of Messiah; and he was eating with

the outcasts and neglecting the high officials of the church! It would never do! One can almost see their oily piety as they lodged their criticism against Jesus. Matthew was utterly beyond the reach of this, however. He heard Jesus talk; he watched his life. He saw that here was new truth, which could not be put into the words or forms that the self-satisfied defenders of tradition were using. Fresh wine-skins were absolutely necessary, and Matthew was the kind of a layman who had the nerve to find and use them. This is the sort of a man whom we admire. The scribes could not understand Jesus; but this layman, who knew publican morality from first to last, saw in an instant that Jesus was the bearer of a new truth and the creator of a different standard. The heart of it all was love for friends and foes alike. This got hold of the busy man gathering taxes and made him a frank and fearless follower of Christ.

It is a most healthy picture of Jesus that we get from this relation to Matthew. Once more we see him among the people, talking over the supreme problems of life and sharing the challenging talk near the tax-gatherer's office. It is the wonderful humanity and wholesomeness of Jesus that wins our admiration for him. He does not go into the scholar's study; he does not put on the robes of the priest; he lives in his "house by the side of the road" where the crowds of men go by. Undoubtedly it was the appeal of his healthy humanity, far more than any reasoned claim in argument, which won for Jesus the decision of Matthew. That is why the publican asked Jesus to a banquet as a guest of honor. He knew that the Master would make the occasion happy and profitable.

But a still finer outline of the character of Jesus is that which presents him as the physician of sick souls and the revealer of truth that possesses creative power to make character and transform life. Matching his human simplicity is a certain majesty of spirit, that enables Jesus at the right time to pass the office of a business man and lay a personal obligation upon him, in response to which he changes the whole course of his life. Jesus is a Master with such an imperial command that men who are true to their noblest prompting yield to it with the full surrender of their wills. No general ever gained such perfect obedience from his soldiers; no teacher ever won such implicit allegiance from

his pupils. Jesus speaks and men listen and follow. The accent of the divine imperative is on his kindly lips.

Of all the disciples about whom we know, Matthew was the one who would be able most quickly to discover the full significance of that interpretation which Jesus gave to the old law, the report of which is in the first gospel. While he had the greatest respect for the old covenant, Jesus did not hesitate to give such fresh values to it as revolutionized it for all time. Men had easily asserted in pious pride that they were not murderers; Jesus demanded that they should look into their hearts and search out their old hatreds and grudges. The moral leaders of the time drew their garments aside in holy scorn when they came near a woman who had sinned. Jesus insisted that they should go into the old attic of the soul, bring out into the daylight the secret lust that had lived there with the bats and spiders of pride and selfishness, and clean up the place.

This reveals the moral insight of the Master. He is not ready to sanction any superficial view of truth or goodness. He goes to the root of it; this makes him the true "radical" in the literal meaning of the term. But he balances it all in the just judgment of the conservative, to whom is precious all that is true in the old.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. Of what value are such public and popular discussions of moral and religious subjects as undoubtedly took place around Matthew's toll office? Ought such discussion to be encouraged today?

2. If Jesus were living in America today at what kind of social occasions would he probably be found?

3. To what classes of men and conditions of life is the message of Christ especially imperative now? Are they hearing it? Are we helping to bring them the message?

4. What place has a creed in the religious life of an individual? Of what use is a creed to a church?

5. How can the Church furnish the new forms that are necessary for the expression of the truth for today? Can you name any essential Christian truth that has found new expression in recent years?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

MATTHEW

1. A busy, practical business man, listening and thinking while he carried on his work.
2. Meeting the call to his supreme life work while he was busy with his daily tasks.
3. Honoring Jesus with an immediate and whole-hearted surrender to service.
4. Expressing his loyalty in a public feast and among his friends.
5. Learning and teaching the new law of Christ, whose secret is love for friends and enemies alike.

JESUS

1. Mingling freely and helpfully with men in their daily life, a Man among men.
2. Calling men in the midst of their daily tasks to love and follow him, entering a larger life by giving up smaller tasks and ideals.
3. Sharing and ennobling the happy social relationships of his fellows.
4. Acting as the physician of sick souls.
5. Giving new truth that has power to create the forms in which it may be understood.

CHAPTER IV

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

DAILY READINGS

Fourth Week, First Day: "The Great Summons"

And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother. And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.—Mark 10: 17-22.

Jesus had been in the house with the children. His tender and beautiful act of blessing them was the prelude to this interview with the young man. His mind must have been full of the spirit of the event as he met his eager questioner.

The fact that the young man knelt down when he met Jesus reveals his respect for the Master. He is no rich young snob who comes to Christ with a captious question. He is respectful and honest.

Note also the use of the words "Good Teacher." It is not a term of mere flattery or empty form. The young man apparently means it sincerely; Jesus is not only a rabbi, but he deserves to be called the Good Rabbi. Altogether this is to the young man's credit. He wants to talk with some one who can give him true and good advice. His question is

fair and friendly; it is quite to his credit; he makes a good first impression by it.

It is possible to conceive of a situation in which the great question asked by the young man might be inspired simply by selfish motives. The desire to live forever may be only an expression of supreme vanity. However, there is no reason to suppose that it was so in this case. The desire to live forever, in order that work still may be done for God and humanity, is one of the noblest ambitions that any man could cherish. We note the eagerness with which the young man put his question to Jesus. He came on the run. This shows that he had been thinking. He was rich, and undoubtedly had every resource at hand to gratify his desires for pleasure; but in spite of all that, he had been trying to find out what the supreme thing in life was.

More men think deeply on these things than we ordinarily realize. Just as we saw beneath the hardened surface of the Woman of Samaria's life an eager yearning for the truth, so beneath all the superficial pleasures and riches of this man, there was the earnest desire to understand what would give him eternal life.

Fourth Week, Second Day: "Entering Into Life"

And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments. —Matt. 19: 17.

The young man was a Jew, trained in the knowledge of the Old Testament, whose great commandments he had memorized when he was a child. He knew the way to the good life; but evidently he lacked the power to get results that satisfied his own ideals. He needed power, peace, happiness. That is why he brought his question to Jesus.

At this point we hit upon one of those fine distinctions which Jesus knew so well how to make. He told the young man that there was only one good in all the world, that is, God. The way in which to be good, or to enter into the life that will endure forever, is to become so identified in moral purpose with God that we shall truly share his life.

There is only one basis for ethics. We ought to be good

not simply because it will make the larger number of people happy, and not merely that we may follow the lines of conduct that have been agreed upon; the true reason why we must be good is because we are God's children, bearing his image, and therefore we ought to be like him. This is the law of the Old Testament, "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19: 2). It is also the commandment of Jesus, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5: 48). In all our discussion of the fundamentals of the moral life let us never forget that the warrants for goodness rest at last in the nature and the will of God.

Then follows the great lesson that obedience is the way of life. This truth is not always welcome to eager and impetuous youth; but it is inescapable. See how it applies in business. A boy cannot learn a trade unless he will give up to the demands of it and train himself through a long course of discipline. Think how a violinist must obey the laws of his art before he can play at a concert. The success of a student depends upon his willingness to submit to the rigid and relentless demands of the particular study and of the whole curriculum. In all these relations obedience is the way by which we enter into life. The same law holds in religion. Here also we must obey to live. What laws are we most reluctant to obey? *How does obedience in specific cases help us later in accepting other obligations?*

Fourth Week, Third Day: "A Fair Inquiry"

He saith unto him, Which?—Matt. 19: 18.

As we have interpreted the young man's approach to Jesus to be sincere, so we consider his question a fair one. Study another occasion when Jesus was asked to name the essential commandments and compare the spirit of the two inquiries (Mark 12: 28-34).

It is the sign of a genuine soul when one asks such searching questions as this. Many young men are too sluggish to think at all. They let the great problems go by default. They seem to think that they can solve their difficulties by ignoring them. This young man at least faced the task of making discriminations.

And Jesus welcomed the question. This is one of the marks of the Master as a teacher. He was sympathetic, responsive, and patient with every honest questioner. Recall his dealing with the Woman of Samaria. No rebuff ever was received at his hands as men, in the spirit of fairness, brought him their honest questions.

It is necessary to make discriminations in our definition of our ethical ideal and our application of the moral law. The landscape of right and wrong is not a prairie; it is broken by mountain chains, and there are vast, towering summits in it. To make our survey and finally find ourselves at home in this broken country is one of our greatest tasks.

Different ages and civilizations have stressed now one and now another detail of the moral law. Standards change from generation to generation. What laws do you think are being undervalued or overstressed today?

Fourth Week, Fourth Day: "The Standard of Righteousness"

And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.—Matt. 19: 18, 19.

Jesus refers at once with complete respect and confidence to the ancient Mosaic law as giving the standards of righteousness. He cherishes the ethical conceptions of the past and sanctions the teachings of the moral masters of his race. But he is no slavish literalist, as the Pharisees were. This young man was rich and therefore doubtless subject to the perils that wealth brings. Possibly some of his money had been gained by methods that would not bear close scrutiny. So, according to the report in Mark 10: 19, Jesus added a seventh standard and commandment, "Do not defraud."

The standard that Jesus proposed to the young man was composed of seven items, four of which are negative and three positive. Are these adequate for the modern struggle for character? Is the item added in Mark explicit enough to secure economic justice if it were fully carried out in the business world today?

The character that results from keeping such a set of commandments must be hard and mechanical. It issues inevitably from so much obedience to so many laws rendered for so long a time. Therefore this kind of "righteousness that is according to the law" is essentially a kind of moral and spiritual book-keeping. It produces uprightness and heroic devotion; but there is in it nothing of the freedom, kindness, and love which lie beneath the new law that Jesus brought to men.

Fourth Week, Fifth Day: "The Great Omission"

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet?—Matt. 19: 20.

See Mark 10: 20 for the added item, "From my youth up." As we think of the young man, giving this instant and honest reply to Jesus, we do not regard his words as a moral boast. It is undoubtedly a true estimate; he had kept the laws of God. And therefore he was strong and worthy of honor.

There was nothing of the negative and "goody goody" character about him. True moral worth is something that wins respect from others. A girl is reported to have said concerning a student as he came back from his first year at college: "Of course, George is not so good as he was before he went away; but he's lots more interesting." But moral integrity is interesting. And this rich young man wins our attention and commands our respect, not simply because he is rich, but because he is clean and wholesome, sound and healthy morally.

He had begun in the right way, and early. In those impressionable years between babyhood and the "teen" age the channels of habit had been cut in the right direction. This boy with the strong, beautiful body was no puny fellow who was good for nothing.

But the fault in his character was that it was not developing along the line of great inward loyalties; it was incapable of heroic sacrifices. Judged by the standard of deeds it was noble; according to the test of motives it was weak. This "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null" character needed the touch of passion and the gleam of a great consecration in it; then it would become truly human. And

nothing less than the touch of Jesus could furnish the lacking fire to fuse the gold.

Fourth Week, Sixth Day: "The Great Opportunity"

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.—Mark 10: 21.

Jesus and the young man both met a test successfully in this interview. The young man won the love of Jesus by his moral integrity. That was no small triumph. The success of Jesus lay in his instant discernment and approval of the young man's moral soundness. Every time we come into the presence of the good and the true we are radically tested; do we discern and approve it? Jesus always did. This is the mark of a noble mind and a clean soul. Do you immediately admire the good when you see it; does the beautiful call forth your loyalty; does truth win your allegiance instantly and wholly?

In studying the command of Jesus, balance the negative and the positive. The four significant words are, "sell," "give," "come," "follow." We have given too much attention to the first and the second. We have overlooked the positive meaning of the third and fourth. It seems hard to ask this fine young fellow to sell his possessions and give away the proceeds. But turn to the second pair of commanding words. Jesus simply sought to detach the young man from that which was hindering his spiritual development, in order that he might be prepared for a companionship and service which would enrich and perfect his life. Jesus asked him to give up that which was spoiling his character in order that he might gain that which would make his life noble and useful. Jesus never asks men simply to give up their possessions as an end in itself. He makes the detachment the means to a higher end. If the young man had obeyed the simple command, "Come and follow me," his life would have been filled with positive power and great achievement. But the way into this success was detachment from his riches.

Is there anything standing in the way of our entering fully into personal relations with Christ? To hold fast to any form of wealth or action which is a barrier to our larger usefulness for Christ is to miss the meaning of life. *When once we are fully engaged in Christian service we have so much rewarding work to do that it is no real self-denial to detach ourselves from anything that we see stands in the way of its performance.*

Fourth Week, Seventh Day: "The Great Refusal"

But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions. —Mark 10: 22.

The action of the young man has come to be known as "The Great Refusal." We must not do him any injustice. Is this too severe a description of his action? This was his supreme opportunity. To fail at the highest point is a tragic calamity. And this was failure in the critical moment.

But why was the young man sorrowful? He was going back to his rich friends, to his feasts and his excursions, to his luxurious life and financially care-free hours. No problems of a living wage, the weekly rent, clothes for the children, money enough for books and pleasures, would trouble him. He would not need to work his way through college, set up his home in economy and self-denial, or sacrifice to the bleeding point to stand by a comrade in struggle. Why, then, did he go away with hanging head and bitterness in his heart? What is the real root of the deepest sorrows of men?

What do you think that the young man expected Jesus to say? His action seems to have been taken immediately, with no time given to reflection. Evidently it was an issue instantly clear and settled in his mind. We never hear of the young man again in the gospel story. His name has perished. Imagine what might have happened if he had yielded to Jesus that day! He might have become one of the disciples; he might have written a gospel. Suppose his name was Simeon. We might have today a "Gospel according to Simeon," from which millions of followers of Christ would have read. There might be a "St. Simeon," honored by young men, a

man's saint. There might have been so many honorable deeds recorded concerning this man with the forgotten name. But he lost it all, because he could not surrender his gold and his honors for something beyond any price.

How Jesus must have felt as he saw the young man go away sorrowful! It hurt him to the very heart. He needed friends; he needed this young man just then. His heart was hungry for loyalty; and here was a young man, upright and strong, who could have given him loyal support. The sight of the retreating figure must have stabbed Jesus with a new pang. *It is terrible to fail Jesus when he expects us to be loyal!*

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

The scene in which Jesus meets the rich young man opens with the stage set for one of the most beautiful events of the Master's life; it closes in tragic sorrow. Here was an honest questioner. He is reverent as he comes into the presence of the Master. Every word and action indicates sincerity.

He has been thinking, too. His thought has not been profound, but it has been real. He is not satisfied with the world that he sees or the life that he lives. He is yearning for endless life; he wants to know how to gain it. All this is to his credit and makes him immediately worthy of our admiration.

Then he is sound and clean, so far as his moral acts are concerned. He can look the great Ten Commandments in the face without a blush. Moral soundness like this is not won without a struggle; for the blood of youth is hot and the impulses of growing manhood are not kept within bounds except by a firm hand. Such character as the young man possessed has to be paid for in the hard cash of a good fight with the foes of clean living. So this strong fellow is no pale worldling. He has drawn his sword against his foes and has not gone down in the battle.

But he is rich and his money crowds up into the foreground of his life as an interest of the first magnitude. It has not debauched him in morals; but it has done something to him that is worse even than that. It has made him incapable of a great sacrifice and loyalty. In the moment when he

ought to see clearly, his bonds and his dividends get in between him and the true object of his quest. His foe now is not lust or hate; it is his bank account. His landscape is hopelessly out of focus, and the image is mixed strangely because there is a big dollar mark on the lens. He is done to death in his vision by the gold in the chest at home.

And so he faces the alternatives, wealth and bondage, or Christ and freedom, with the issue decided even before it is proposed. He is enslaved, although he does not know it. It is useless to argue about what might have happened if something had not happened which did happen; but it is always interesting to fancy what might have been. This is the only way in which we can estimate the disaster which befell the young man. He missed being one of the best friends of Jesus.

The young man's sorrow is greatly to his credit. He is conscious in a dim way that he is missing something; but he is not alert enough to the situation to appreciate what it is. The sense of loss makes him downcast; but it is not strong enough to make him decisive. In this dim way, however, he seems to be aware that he is losing an opportunity. But an indefinite regret does not bring him practical help. The situation is unrelieved. He goes out into a sorrowful life.

The moral appreciation of Jesus stands out in clear contrast to the wavering of the young man. The Master sees the good, knows its one true source, and offers it in its highest form to his questioner. The best thing in the world is a life of such love and service as Jesus lived. In other words, Jesus himself is the example of the highest good. His character is the supreme attainment toward which any person can strive.

One way in which to express the contrast between the character of the young man and that of Jesus is to say that the former made the good an enemy instead of a friend of the best, while Jesus always kept the best ahead in his life and was not content with anything less. It was not a flagrant evil that stood between the young man and the best gift that ever was offered him; it was a lower good. And in choosing it, he permitted the good to become the foe of the best. It is an error into which one is easily betrayed, and it is none the less disastrous because it is so plausible.

Thus Jesus is revealed in this interview as offering the

supreme opportunity to perfect and glorify individual life. It is such a challenge as no other moral or spiritual master offers to the world. Great teachers have set forth philosophies and codes of law as the objectives of their disciples, noble prophets have pointed their fellows to the God whom they were forgetting. But Jesus called and bound his followers to loyalty to himself. In a recent description of the way in which the Armenian Christians have paid the price of loyalty to Christ by suffering and death, a missionary who knows them intimately said, "They did not give their lives for an abstract doctrine or any theory of religion; they believed that Christ was alive and that their loyalty to him as a real Person was something for which they dared to die."

Jesus was clear in his vision, definite in his call, and faithful to his part of the covenant when he told men that the way into the perfect life was through a personal relationship with himself. And for two thousand years the reality of this claim has been vindicated by millions of persons who have come to the hour of decision and have not made the great refusal. What a superb character it is that can stand behind a claim like this! Jesus, the flawless Man, the perfect Son of the Father, lived his brief life among men and dared to affirm that he was the Way into the perfect life. The moral majesty and the sublime spiritual worth of his character had to lie back of this call and claim, or it would have been the most insolent challenge that the world ever has heard. But it has never failed those who have paid the price.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the sources of moral and religious instruction and certainty to which young people are turning today?
2. Why ought we to be good? Discuss the basis of ethics.
3. How far can the laws of the Christian life as laid down by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount be kept under the conditions of the modern world?
4. What are some of the interests and possessions from which anyone must detach himself who is to follow Christ now as his Master?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

1. Eager to know truth, thoughtful and respectful.
2. Upright in character according to the Ten Commandments.
3. Unwilling to detach himself from a lesser good in order that he might find and follow the best.
4. Going away from the scene of a great decision in sorrow, because he was not discerning enough and courageous enough to begin a life of service with Christ.
5. Perhaps one of the lost evangelists and saints of the world.

JESUS

1. Winning the respect of young men.
2. Pointing men to God as the only good.
3. Appreciating, honoring, and loving moral worth.
4. Affording the supreme opportunity by which anyone can complete and glorify daily life.
5. Suffering when those fail him who ought to be loyal.

CHAPTER V

Jesus and Nicodemus

DAILY READINGS

Fifth Week, First Day: "A Visitor at Night"

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.—John 3: 1, 2.

We like to think of Jesus sitting in the circle of light thrown by a little lamp in the room on the roof of the house where he was staying. The air may have been soft and cool and the breeze rustling the leaves on the vine or the fig tree. Perhaps he had gone up to the roof in order to be alone after a day of anxious thought and nervous strain when he had been spending the very strength of his soul in meeting the needs of many people.

Then appeared his cautious visitor, Nicodemus, the distinguished and dignified member of the Sanhedrin. Jesus was a young man. He had grown up in Nazareth, and had not enjoyed close personal contact with the official life and the religious leaders of Jerusalem. It was a severe test of his self-control and poise of character.

The interview began with a compliment, which we believe to have been genuine on the part of Nicodemus, and which surely must have been most gratifying to Jesus. The Master met it superbly. He was not thrown off his guard, and he did not, because of it, lose his sense of the serious importance of the interview and of his own work.

Nicodemus stands out in a most pleasing light. In spite of his lack of courage, he is genuinely religious, and he longs to know the truth. He has weighed the value of Jesus' words

and deeds and has reached the sincere conviction that they must be the sign of God's favor and sanction. So he seeks Jesus, not out of curiosity, but with the sincere purpose of learning the truth about the Master.

What impression has Jesus made upon us, as we have read the story of his life in the gospels, and heard men speak of his influence upon them? Are we, too, trying to meet the Master personally in intimate spiritual fellowship, that we may understand the secret of his message and his person?

Fifth Week, Second Day: "The Birth from Above"

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?—John 3: 3-9.

Jesus and his guest apparently spent no time in passing commonplace remarks. Jesus plunged instantly into a proposition that plumbed the very deeps of the human soul. He felt that Nicodemus had come to him with a serious question, and it was no time for trifling.

The Master used here, as he did so often, a physical symbol to express a spiritual truth. He told Nicodemus that in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven one must experience a radical inner change of purpose, and a thoroughgoing adjustment of spiritual relationships that could be described by nothing less than a new birth to the soul. This, of course, is not a definition; it is a description of the Christian life in the familiar language of every day.

Just as the advent into human life means that the baby begins instantly to make those discoveries and adjustments in which his physical life consists, so when the human soul

enters into the relation of personal allegiance to Christ, it starts upon a quest which will require eternity for its accomplishment. So, in the strictest sense of the word, the true Christian experience is a "life."

It is probable that the two men could hear the sound of the wind among the leaves as they talked. Nicodemus, like the Woman of Samaria, failed to grasp the meaning of the physical symbol. Jesus answered his hesitation by saying, "Listen to the wind! You cannot explain it; but you can feel it. Be as honest in trusting the influences that bear in upon your soul. You cannot define God's swaying impulses; but you can open your spirit to them, feel them, and obey them." Is this a fair challenge to us in our moments of spiritual hesitation?

Fifth Week, Third Day: "The Sure Witness"

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.—John 3: 10-15.

The dramatic contrast between the hesitation of Nicodemus and the assurance of Jesus is vividly represented here. The older man, a master of Israel, supposed to be at home in the intricacies of the spiritual life, loses his way at once in the interpretation which Jesus gives him. All he can do is to say in bewildered fashion, "how can these things be!" It is the melancholy exclamation of a soul that is fatigued with the mysteries of religious debate, and has not found anchorage in the certainty and confidence that Jesus can bring. On the other hand, Jesus is absolutely sûrefooted concerning the relations of the human soul to God the Father. He makes affirmations which no one else has ever dared to make, and he justifies them not only in his own life, but in the experi-

ence of every one who follows him in loving obedience. He said that he had lived with the Father; that he had come forth from the Father, that he was to return to the Father when his earthly mission was done. Jesus never endeavored to speak on other subjects with a final certainty. He never appears as an authority in history or science. His field is the human soul and its relations to God, and here he always speaks with absolute clarity of conviction.

We are justly impatient with the claims that men make to authority. But every one knows that there are certain vital questions and certain areas of the spiritual life where we simply must have some word which we can trust implicitly. Jesus spoke with this accent of final authority, and we never shall be disappointed if we follow him with unshaken confidence.

When Jesus describes himself as "in heaven," he speaks, of course, as one who is living on earth in close vital relations with men and things, but is at the same time living intimately under those laws that are supposed to obtain in the heavenly life. This is a definition of the Christian experience—that is, actual living on earth, day by day, according to the ruling motives which govern the perfect association of loyal spirits in vital union with God. Is this a practicable ideal for our everyday life?

Fifth Week, Fourth Day: "The Supreme Gift"

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.—John 3: 16, 17.

The section John 3: 16-21 inclusive is sometimes regarded as not the identical words spoken by Jesus himself, but a reflection by the author of our gospel. Whether this is true or not, certainly it contains one of the most comprehensive and satisfactory statements of the character and mission of Jesus that we possess.

Jesus is here defined as God's Supreme Gift, the Saviour of the world. The dream of the salvation of the world is one of the noblest that ever has gained mastery over the

human mind. Think for a moment what it means to save the world from all the calamities that follow in the wake of human sin! Imagine the kind of a world we should live in tomorrow if during every hour every living person should act thoroughly according to the law of love and be entirely controlled by the purposes of Jesus Christ! That is what the salvation of the world would mean. It is not escaping from something, it is being saved into something.

Jesus came into the world in order that he might bring it into the same kind of a blessed and eternal union with God as he himself enjoyed when he was living among men. Have you thought of Jesus as saving yourself and your surroundings into this kind of a permanent and happy union with God the Father?

Fifth Week, Fifth Day: "The Light of Life"

He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.—John 3: 18-21.

It was most appropriate that Jesus should use the figure of light in the attempt to describe his mission to the world. It was night, and the contrast between the little oil lamp glowing on the stand and the broad daylight upon the world in the morning must have been apparent to both of them.

Phillips Brooks describes the Master's use of this illustration in the following paragraph:

"Sometimes Jesus gathers His work and nature up in one descriptive word, and offers it, as it were out of a wide-open hand, complete to His disciples. In such a word all the details of His relation to the soul and to the world are comprehensively included. As the disciple listens and receives it, he feels all his fragmentary and scattered experiences drawing together and rounding into unity. As, having heard it, he carries it forth with him into his life, he finds all future

experiences claiming their places within it, and getting their meaning from it. Such words of Jesus are like spheres of crystal into which the world is gathered, and where the past and future, the small and the great, may all be read."

Jesus reveals to us not only our true selves, but the significance of the world in which we live; he touches our life with creative energy; he sustains and orders its progress. Have we brought our lives into the full light of the character and teaching and spirit of Jesus? Would we be afraid to have yesterday's conduct displayed in the radiance of the Master's ideal? Shall we try to live today in such a way that our work will bear the revealing test of the light of Christ?

Fifth Week, Sixth Day: "A Plea for Justice"

The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why did ye not bring him? The officers answered, Never man so spake. The Pharisees therefore answered them, Are ye also led astray? Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed. Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to him before, being one of them), Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.—John 7: 45-52.

The Pharisees had sent the temple police to arrest the Master, but the wonder of his personality and his gracious words had so overcome the officers that they returned with their mission unaccomplished. With the curl of religious scorn on their lips, the Pharisees taunted them with the question, "Have any of the leaders accepted the claims of this man?" It was the old voice of official arrogance, and furnishes the background for the action of Nicodemus.

Nicodemus now finds himself in the position of a belated defender of Jesus' right to a fair hearing before the people and an honest trial at the hands of the officials. However, it is better to come late to the defense of the truth than not to come at all, and Nicodemus wins our respect by the way in which he stands up for fair play.

His strength was tested in no small way when Nicodemus

thus took his stand as the champion of Christ, full in the face of contempt and criticism. The men of his class and station were unanimous in their scorn, not only for Jesus, but for all those who were inclined to hear and follow him. But Nicodemus was not dismayed. He simply appealed to the elementary sense of justice in all human hearts, and insisted that no man should be condemned without a fair hearing. This was admirable.

It is interesting to notice the way in which his antagonists sent him to the Old Testament for the proof that Jesus could not be the Christ. They were as confident that they could disprove the Master's claims from Scripture as he was certain that the Old Testament confirmed by prophecy his divine origin. Nicodemus, however, discovered that there was something greater than the literal meaning of a written record: it was the personality of the living Jesus himself. So he tested the Master's claim by the touchstone of the Master's personality.

Fifth Week, Seventh Day: "The Last Honors"

And after these things Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took away his body. And there came also Nicodemus, he who at the first came to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.—John 19: 38-40.

Here they are at the end—Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus; the one provides a grave, the other the spices to scatter on the winding sheet, wrapped about the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, of course, was no worse than the most of us. He had come of his own accord to Jesus, and evidently had been deeply impressed by what Jesus had said to him. He had kept carefully out of the way of difficulties which would have inevitably followed his own championship of the Master's cause, and had dared to put up only a late defense before the council. At the last, however, he comes with his friends and brings what was probably the sign of

his true appreciation of the Master to the tomb. The scene is really tragic. Flowers and kind words for the dead come very strangely from those who gave no support to the living. The very issues of life and death were at stake, and Nicodemus surely must have known it. He had power and prestige; he probably could have exerted strong personal influence in Jesus' behalf. It is too strong a term to call him a coward. There may have been good reasons for his coming to Jesus by night. But the scene at the tomb reveals the fact that, knowing the truth, he did not come out and stand for it with all the force of his position and personal energy. How desperately the cause of the Master needed the voice and vote of Nicodemus in the Sanhedrin! We know perfectly well that one resolute man can often turn a whole assembly when he is acting under profound conviction of the truth. There was possibly—who can tell?—an opportunity to swing the leaders of the Jewish nation in behind the kingdom of Jesus.

The only response to this imperial privilege and lost opportunity is a mass of expensive spices after the day of battle is past.

> "To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
> Must vary as the givers."

Are we living so that, fearless and unashamed, we can place our wreath upon the tomb of the next great Christian leader who dies? What would you have done at the grave in the garden of Joseph?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

It is a real joy to watch the movement of Jesus' mind in an interview, especially when he is answering questions. He has such quickness of insight and breadth of sympathy that he catches his questioner's point of view at once and enters into the very spirit of the question. This was apparent in the case of the Woman of Samaria; it is evident in the talk with Nicodemus. Whenever a question is honest, Jesus receives and answers it with insight and fairness.

It was a strange fact that Nicodemus, with all his training and natural nobility of spirit, should have stood so bewildered before the simple truth that entrance into the life with Christ

must involve an inward change which can best be described as a new birth. The illustration is wonderfully clear. Lincoln used it with skill in his "Gettysburg Address," when he said: "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom." Through the shattering and constructive experiences of a civil war, the great President saw that changes were coming in the life of the people which would be nothing less than a new birth, or, in the language of the Christian creeds and theology, a "regeneration." Such a revolutionary change could not be realized at once; but in its beginning would be involved all its later development, as the oak tree lies wrapped in the sprouting acorn. But Nicodemus never had thought of religion in this vital way. To him it had consisted in rigid adherence to a set of ideas which had been pronounced to be authoritative. It was expressed in so many formal acts which had been defined as appropriate. And his mind could not grasp the ideal of a spiritual relationship between the soul and God which should embrace and inspire all one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. So the old man trained in the schools, with his mind encrusted with traditions and formalism, sat beside the young man, whose soul was glowing with the joy of a life that was free and victorious in the love of God, and could only say, "How can these things be?"

The most profitable impression that we can gain from the study of the week is a clear idea of the naturalness and power of Jesus' religion. As he describes it to Nicodemus in the figure of the new birth we make out its essential marks clearly.

It was vital and not mechanical. The Pharisees were living by a system of religious book-keeping. If they washed so many times, bowed so often, said so many prayers, fasted at proper intervals, they found and pleased God, they thought. But Jesus broke the chains of a conception like this with a single word, *life*. It is as if he said, "But you must live religiously as you do physically, in most intimate union with your Father in heaven. Your spiritual life is as much a part of your activity as the beating of your very heart. God is nearer to you than the air that fills your lung cells. Love is as real as the force that holds you to the earth when you walk. Make the practice of the spiritual life the supreme part of all your living."

Then Jesus made it clear that religion is a growing experi-

ence. The child is not born full-grown. Paul, too, was fond of the idea "babes in Christ." Our whole life-time on earth is simply our opportunity to begin the process of spiritual development. Indeed, one of the best descriptions of life is "growing a soul." We have no right to expect too much in the way of perfect attainment; but we have the right to expect that we shall be making progress in the way of attainment.

Another idea that is conveyed by the great figure used by Jesus is the wholesome joy and sense of power in normal life. Remember how a baby loves to thrust out its arms; how the laugh of triumph comes when the first steps are taken; how full healthy childhood is of the love of life. This was precisely what Jesus himself experienced in his religious life. He says that he came to the world in order that men might have life, not in scanty measure, but "abundantly." And so far as we catch the true vision of Jesus from the gospel records, he was precisely this sort of a man, rejoicing in his world and his work with all the naturalness of a healthy child. No whimpering complaints from him; no evasions and cynicisms; but hearty, glad, victorious living!

And this vital idea of religion which Jesus gave to Nicodemus involves the fact of its endlessness. Jesus lived and loved with eternity in view, not as a fearful foreboding of judgment, but as a real incentive to brave and high service. The light and the power of immortality were reflected in his happy life. So the fact of immortality was not a truth "immortal in the library but dead in the life," as is so often the case.

This is the religion that Jesus had and this is what he offers now, as he presented it to Nicodemus in the quiet talk which they had together centuries ago. We must not think of Christianity as something that has been crystallized in creeds or reduced to the form of institutions, so that it has ceased to become the power for a new life. Creeds and institutions are necessary; but life is still the creative energy of Christianity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How far can we trust figures and metaphors to explain spiritual truth? What is the great danger in their use?

How does the analogy of birth convey the essential truth concerning the Christian life?

2. What is the kingdom of God as Jesus understood it?

3. To what extent has Jesus justified the claims to authority in religion that he is represented as making?

4. In what ways are we justified in thinking of Jesus as saving the world now?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

NICODEMUS

1. A timid, politic seeker after truth.

2. Wise in his knowledge of the world in general, but slow to grasp spiritual truth.

3. A defender of fair play.

4. Giving belated honor to the Master whom he was too timid to follow openly.

JESUS

1. Self-possessed in the presence of his official superior.

2. Speaking with absolute certainty concerning spiritual truth.

3. Daring to declare himself the Saviour of the world, with power to draw all men to himself.

4. Making the supreme declaration concerning God's purpose for the world.

CHAPTER VI

Jesus and Two Sick Men

DAILY READINGS

Sixth Week, First Day: "In the Crowded House"

And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he spake the word unto them.—Mark 2: 1, 2.

The sources of Jesus' popularity are not difficult of analysis. There was a universal and eager hope among the people of a coming Leader. Jesus met this expectation by the genuineness of his humanity, the sympathy of his contacts with others, and the helpfulness of his words and deeds. He used none of the cheap devices by which mere seekers after popularity attempt to catch and hold the good-will of the crowd; the reality of his love for others shone through all he said and did. He must have responded to this situation in Capernaum with the same eagerness which made him forget his physical hunger when he was talking with the Woman of Samaria.

Jesus was compelled to meet a practical temptation. He was in danger of being "spoiled by success." But he was wise and humble-hearted enough not to be misled by popularity. He knew that he must depend upon a small number of friends whom he could trust to the utmost. He knew that he could not rely upon the permanence of popular favor; his divine program for the world required the selection, training, and patient guidance of those who would literally repeat his life in theirs after he was gone from among them. Jesus had the right view of popularity. It was never sought; it was not repelled; but it was not depended upon.

So he constantly narrowed the circle of his intensive work from the crowd to the general group of disciples, from these to the seventy, then to the twelve, and finally to the three comrades of his inmost confidence, Peter, James, and John. Where do we belong in reference to the Master? Are we merely one of the crowd, responsive but irresponsible, taking up space, but not exerting influence? Or have we drawn so close to him in loyalty and true devotion that we feel the compulsion of his commandments and the inspiration of sharing his counsels?

Sixth Week, Second Day: "Love and Faith Will Find a Way"

And behold, men bring on a bed a man that was palsied: and they sought to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And not finding by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went up to the housetop, and let him down through the tiles with his couch into the midst before Jesus.—Luke 5: 18, 19.

Perhaps this cripple had been carried every day on his mattress to lie in a public place and beg, like the lame man who lay at the Beautiful Gate of the temple (Acts 3: 2-11). He was helpless. His hope lay only in the fidelity and earnestness of his friends.

They had set out to carry him to Jesus. When they reached the house, the room was packed with people; they could not even reach the door with their burden. What is more careless of others than a crowd! Not a movement did they make to let the sick man in.

But love and faith will find a way. This is a fine piece of true comradeship and practical team work. From two to four men were required to carry the mattress on which the paralytic lay. They may have been kinsmen or neighbors. They had doubtless done this service often. But now, as never before, the welfare of their friend lay in their hands. Imagine their earnest talk as they found themselves shut out of the house. Someone suggested the roof. There were outside stairs leading up to it. The men made their way to the flat roof, one story up, with their burden. Jesus was in the room directly beneath. It was a slight task to take

up the roofing, although the noise and dust must have been an annoyance to those below. When this was done, the mattress was lowered by the corners, so that the people in the room could reach up and support it until it rested on the floor. So the sick man lay in the presence of the Master, not because he had found his way there himself, but because others had made it possible for him to reach the goal of his desire.

The lesson is full of suggestions as to the way in which we are responsible for bringing others to Christ. There are many who have heard of him and in their own weak way are seeking to approach him. What they need is the help of such true comrades and the support of such determined love as shall bring them at last face to face with Christ. What are we doing to overcome obstacles and break down barriers in order to bring others to Christ?

Sixth Week, Third Day: "The Reward of Faith"

And seeing their faith, he said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.—Luke 5: 20.

Jesus constantly exalted faith as the condition on which physical and spiritual blessings were received. As Jesus understood faith, what was it? It was not credulity, the assent to an absurdity, nor was it the mere acceptance of that which cannot be demonstrated. It was essentially trust in another, a real transaction based upon mutual confidence. It consisted in putting one's self into the hands of another and yielding one's welfare confidently to the keeping of a second person. This is the "faith of a transaction," such as one exercises when he not only expresses confidence in his doctor's skill but actually takes his prescribed medicine and submits to guidance.

The cure of the sick man was conditioned upon the faith of his friends. No reference is made to the faith of the man himself; the writer of this gospel conveys the impression that it was when Jesus saw the persistent faith of the men who carried the mattress that he pronounced the forgiveness of the sick man's sins. But undoubtedly the faith of the one inspired and strengthened the faith of the other. The paralytic gave heart and hope to his friends in their

efforts; the men who bore the burden of the paralyzed body strengthened the faith of their sick comrade. So it is that faith strengthens faith and hope quickens hope. How much are you doing to vivify the faith of your fellows? And are you getting as much renewal of faith from your comrades as you might?

Sixth Week, Fourth Day: "The Word of Authority"

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they were afraid, and glorified God, who had given such authority unto men.—Matt. 9: 4-8.

Once more we trace the character of Jesus in its aspect of authority. It appears against the background of the criticisms of the scribes, who were prepared to charge Jesus with blasphemy because he had dared to tell the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. They did not make the open charge; but their whispered conversation was enough to make Jesus certain as to what they had in their minds. These men were the defenders of the authority of tradition and of the Scriptures. Jesus was the master of the authority of the soul in union with God.

Every form of sickness was associated in the thought of the time with some kind of sin, which was supposed to be the cause of the trouble. Jesus accepted the current explanations and acted in accord with them.

Since, therefore, sin was supposed to be the cause of the paralytic's infirmity, Jesus goes to the very root of the matter and declares that the man's sins are forgiven. This is consistent with all the thinking and action of the Master. He does not treat life in its superficial aspects; he is not interested in symptoms, but in causes.

Only one impression could possibly have been made upon the people in the crowded house: Jesus was master of the

situation and had full authority over the case. He was perfectly outspoken in claiming it for himself. Those who were closest to him in his earthly life were sure that he made good with his claim.

Jesus Christ is our highest spiritual authority. We are often restless regarding authority in the spiritual life; where shall it be found? we ask. It is found in Jesus. His experience of God assures us that the Father is also the God for us. His life is the expression of what we may confidently expect to grow toward. In union with him we receive a divine power which makes us strong enough to overcome our temptations and to realize the ideals which are revealed to us in his gloriously victorious life. There are innumerable witnesses to the fact that Jesus speaks now, as he did centuries ago, and assures the soul of the forgiveness of sins and of the power to walk strongly in a new life.

Sixth Week, Fifth Day: "Washed in the Pool of Siloam"

And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.—John 9: 1-7.

The figure of the blind man was pathetic. He never had been able to see at all. He was a practical problem to himself, an economic problem to his family, and a theological problem to the scribes, who discussed at length the question whether his own sin or that of his parents had brought him into calamity. No man wants to be a problem; he wants to be a normal man among men.

Jesus discovers the blind man, perhaps at the temple gate He refuses to become entangled in the wearisome discussions

of the scribes. If there is an explanation of the blindness, he affirms, it must lie in the fact that the mercy of God is to find an expression through it. The case seems urgent to the Master. He cannot overlook or forget it; the overwhelming sense of mission and pressing opportunity rests upon him. He is tremendously in earnest; yet he does not fret. There is no trace of worry in his actions; yet he proceeds as if every moment were precious and every opportunity to help someone were truly a gift of God. How can we unite these two ways of living: first, such a sense of the urgency of life as will drive us into every experience with the determination to use it up to the full limit of its possibility as an opportunity for useful service; second, such a consciousness of the fact that we can rely upon the help and power of God that we shall not dissipate any energy in mere fretfulness or be anything else than brave and calm?

Jesus said that this man had been born blind, in order that the power and mercy of God might be expressed in his experience and example. Is it right to say that every man's life is a plan of God? How can we escape fatalism in affirming this? How do our own daily lives furnish a revelation of the mercy and love of God?

Sixth Week, Sixth Day: "Knowing One Thing"

So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. They said therefore unto him, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples? And they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes. We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth. Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.—John 9: 24-34.

This man who had been physically blind all his life seems to have cultivated a wonderful power to see straight mentally. He had no theories by which he forced the explanation of his experiences; he brought his theories out of his experiences. He had met Jesus in a great moment. The result was a new power—he could see. And he formed his opinion of the Man who had helped him into light and joy from that fact, and not from what anyone else was saying or thinking about Jesus.

Then came the Pharisees. They had a definite theory concerning Jesus. And they insisted that the man who had been blind should think in their way. He, in turn, insisted that he should be permitted to reach his own decision in the light of his own experience. They affirmed that Jesus was a sinner and he affirmed that the actual deeds and manifest character of Jesus should be made the basis of judgment. The Pharisees were intensely logical. They reasoned like this: No sinner could do a good deed; Jesus is a sinner; therefore Jesus did not make the blind man see. But the man was in no way disturbed by their logical conclusion. He simply looked at them and said, "But I can see, and this man made it possible." The happy man could not share their theories; he could know only the facts of which he was personally conscious. Knowing these, he was sure that he had met a man who had power and to whom he owed his sight.

Our safe path to our fundamental doctrines is through our experience, as the blind man found it, and not to our experience through our doctrines, as the scribes tried to force him to go. Doctrine and life are both necessary; but life comes first. The scribes lost Christ through bondage to their theories; the blind man found him through simple trust in a personal experience. The former experienced theology; the latter, religion.

Sixth Week, Seventh Day: "Finding the Son of God"

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen

him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind. Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind?—John 9: 35-40.

Compare this paragraph with the study of the Woman of Samaria. Jesus again declares his divine character, this time to a man who must have led a cramped life, inasmuch as he had been struggling with the handicap of blindness since his birth. But he is ready to accept the evidence and give his allegiance to Jesus. Once more the Master wins a soul that is untrained in the technicalities of religion. The religious experts of the day scorned Jesus; the common people heard him gladly.

The direct answers of Jesus to the man and his somewhat puzzling answers to the Pharisees are an interesting example of the way in which he adapts his teaching to the mental and spiritual level of his hearers. The Pharisees delighted in argumentation and involved statements. So Jesus met them on their own ground.

How easy it would have been for the man to have given himself up so completely, first to joy in his new-found world, and, second, to dismal complaint that he had been expelled from the synagogue, that he would have had no interest in the character of his great Benefactor! But he yielded neither to joy nor to sorrow. He kept his heart and his interests right and was ready to know Jesus better, in order that he might believe on him more fully.

When we describe Jesus as the Son of God we mean all that can possibly be involved in our highest and ideal conception of the relation of a human son to his father. It is no more difficult for us to believe on Christ as the Son of the Father than it was for the man born blind. We cannot, of course, stand in the same physical relationship to him, for Jesus of Nazareth is no longer living in a human body. But we can establish and maintain the same moral and spiritual relationship. To act from the same motives as those which controlled Jesus is to become really one with him. We can love, trust, and obey Jesus Christ now, as truly

as the blind man did, by yielding the same allegiance to his personal authority.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

The paralytic let down through the roof is one of the most striking examples in the Bible of the utter helplessness of certain phases of human life. Everything depends upon the service that others are ready to render. If constant care had not surrounded this poor cripple, he would have died a lingering death. But even in an age when there was no such degree of human pity and tenderness as there is now in the world, friends were ready to give up their comfort and ease and work hard for the welfare of a comrade. So, although this man says and does nothing and seems to be the least suggestive and interesting of the characters that Jesus meets, in fact he represents that great mass of humanity, powerless and pitiful, dependent and wretched, for whom all those who love and sympathize must toil and sacrifice. They would be lost without the help of others. They are saved by the faith and service of their comrades.

But these weak ones do something for their strong and healthy fellows which is vital and essential. Without the challenge and claim of palsied humanity, the world would soon grow callous and cynical. It is the constant presence of suffering that helps keep alive the tenderest and noblest graces of human life. Without intending to do so, the paralytic performed a priceless service to his friends. He helped keep them generous and kind. No price was too great to pay for this gift.

The blind man is a character of quite another sort. He is handicapped, but not helpless. He can do something for his own recovery. He has faith for himself and is not wholly dependent upon that of his friends. His most significant characteristic, however, is his straightforward behavior in the face of the theological squabbles of the Pharisees and scribes. He was ignorant of their theories and uninterested in their debates; but he went to the root of the situation straight as an arrow. They might argue all day and all night; he got at the truth in a minute. He could see now, although he had been blind all his life before. The man who made it possible for him to look at a new world with healthy

eyes could not be bad, whatever the theologians might prove by their logic or their traditions. Things were different with him and that gave him the basis for his reasoning. He is the hard-headed reasoner from the realities of experience.

This man is also a fine type of the person who endures the loss of reputation and position in the defense of what he knows to be right and true. To be excommunicated meant to lose standing and privileges in the community. It was no slight matter. One with less stamina in his character might have dodged and compromised and thus kept both his physical eyesight and his social standing. But the man stood true as steel in the test of his sincerity. And when they finally put him out, he stood in the integrity of his own self-respect and never whimpered or grew sour. It is a fine example of the way in which to meet hard experiences in social relations. No weakling bears humiliation in this fine temper.

As we sketch the outlines of the character of Jesus from these two scenes, we are uncertain as to where he is the greater, whether in meeting the annoyance of falling dust and a crowded room, or in making the most challenging claims for himself that ever have come from human lips.

Jesus is great in the midst of the crowd in the house when the paralyzed man is lowered into his presence. It was a disturbing experience. There is many a man who can bear himself like a hero in a conspicuous place and can endure all kinds of severe tests in public; but he goes to pieces over trifles and under little irritations loses his self-mastery disgracefully. But Jesus does not scold when the plaster falls or break into a passion when there is a disturbance in his audience. He is as serene and kind when the circumstances are annoying as he is when everything unites to help him in his teaching.

Again we see Jesus making the most exalted claims for himself. To call himself the Light of the World and the Son of God is most audacious. And there is no mere hinting at the claim; it is positive and explicit. When men revere him he does not refuse to accept their homage. But he does it with the simplicity of one who makes his claim good in the very act. Think of the way in which Cæsar or Napoleon would have received the adoration and loyalty of others! Jesus took it all naturally and was in no way distracted by it. Thus his conduct fits his claim. He acts

as one would have acted who was what he claimed to be. It is a wonderful confirmation of the Master's words by his deeds.

It was almost impossible for Jesus to make the true impression which his personality ought to have made because he was obliged all the time to contend with the false ideas about him. He had either to be himself or to conform to the traditional ideas. He chose to be true to himself, as he only could have done; but it cost him his life in the end. It is thus that tradition and conventional ideas always seek to bend every soul to their shape. Only those who have a clear consciousness of their personal integrity refuse to yield. The Pharisees could not make Jesus conform; so they killed him.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. In the Orient sin and sickness were supposed to be related as cause and effect. To what extent is this idea true?
2. By what other figures than light did Jesus describe his character and mission?
3. What part must we ourselves perform in securing the benefits which Christ is ready to bestow upon us?
4. When you use the words "Son of God" in reference to Jesus Christ, what do the words mean to you?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

The Paralytic

1. Utterly dependent upon the help of others, especially upon their resourcefulness.
2. Profiting by the faith and practical help of comrades.
3. Forgiven and restored to health by Jesus.

The Blind Man

1. Suffering the handicap of blindness from his birth.
2. Obediently assisting in his own cure.
3. Clear and positive in his interpretation of his own experience and refusing to be confused by the theories of others.
4. Suffering for Christ's sake.

5. Eager to know more of Christ; not satisfied with his present experience.
6. Loyally revering the Master.

JESUS

1. Commanding popular attention; pressed by the crowd; successfully meeting the test of popularity.
2. Talking about religion; teaching truth adapted to life; healing and helping all sorts and conditions of men.
3. Undisturbed by small annoyances.
4. Recognizing and approving the faith of men.
5. Forgiving sins.
6. The Light of the World.
7. Suffering from prejudice and false theories.
8. Claiming positively to be the Son of God.
9. Adapting his statements of truth to the need and strength of his hearers.

CHAPTER VII

Jesus and Simon Peter

DAILY READINGS

Seventh Week, First Day: "The New Man with the New Name"

One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).—John 1: 40-42.

In Oriental life the name of a person was more intimately connected with character than it is with us. When the character changed the name was changed. Simon Johnson was one of the most familiar names of the day. It denoted simply an ordinary character without any especial distinction. *Cephas* or *Peter,* on the other hand, meant a *rock*—that is, something outstanding and durable. In this commonplace character, this fisherman, there was latent a person of distinction and power. Simon had not made this discovery up to the time that he met Jesus. He had never understood himself as anything more than the hard-working son of John, living a plain life, and exerting only the ordinary influence of a fisherman. *It is the greatest day in our lives when we catch the vision of what we may become through our relation with Christ.*

No comrade or friend ever had told Simon that he had in him the possibility of becoming Peter. Jesus was the first man who ever looked straight into Simon's eyes, saw into the very depths of his soul, and then told him that he had

resources and possibilities there of which he did not dream. Jesus had this power of clairvoyance in discovering the best that was in everyone whom he met. He saw something to which others were blind. Weak and wicked women appeared to him in the pure light of their possible recovery through the redemptive power of love and faith. So Jesus spoke to the undiscovered best in everyone, arousing ambition, quickening new energies for the struggle into a nobler life. The Master speaks to us today, telling us that we are something better than appears on the surface of our lives and commanding us and cheering us as we undertake the climb to the heights.

It could not come in a day, however. Simon must *become* Peter. That involved struggle and occasional failure. The man must fight for every attainment and hold his gains at the price of vigil and pain. But Jesus would add himself to his friend's endeavor. What progress are we making in the movement toward our possible best? Is Christ a factor in the process?

Seventh Week, Second Day: "The Great Confession"

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.—Matt. 16: 13-20.

This incident reveals with wonderful clearness the character of Peter. He is the natural spokesman of the other disciples

when an expression of opinion is called for. They had heard and were able to report the common talk of the people; he had made up his mind. They had been listening; he had been thinking.

This "Great Confession" of Peter is not a mere theory about Jesus. It represents not merely his opinion concerning Jesus, but his personal loyalty to Christ. He may fail again and again to live up to it; but this specific and hearty affirmation represents what Peter regards in his inmost heart as the substance of his loyalty to Jesus. His Master is the revelation of God to him, and he gives him the reverence, the obedience, and the trust that are due to such a Lord of personal life. This is Peter's theology; but it is also his ruling motive and working principle for daily living. His character is being made by his creed; his conduct is being shaped by his theology. Such a faith is the mightiest force in the making of character; it is creative energy for the production of manhood and womanhood.

The connection between our fundamental idea about Christ and our daily life is that of cause and effect. To acknowledge Jesus as Lord means to conform our life to his ideal. If Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then he is our Master; if he is our Master, then we must strive with all our power to become like him by doing his will. In this way our supreme creed, our living conviction about Jesus, becomes moral and spiritual energy, transforming our life. Impatience with creeds as mere ends in themselves is well founded. But creeds that really take hold on life and shape conduct to Christlike ends are the most noble and necessary factors in everyday living. Thus Christ becomes the most necessary item in our fundamental thought about life. His person is too great to be avoided; his claim is too imperative to be ignored. So the question comes home to everyone with challenging power: "What does Jesus mean to me?"

Seventh Week, Third Day: "A Complete Consecration"

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during

supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.—John 13: 1-9.

As Jesus reached Peter in performing his humble and significant task for the disciples, the thought that must have been in all their minds leaped into words. Peter was always the spokesman for them in such situations; his quick impulses made it inevitable that he should speak. Stress the word *Lord* and accent the pronouns *thou* and *my* in strong contrast, in order to get the meaning of Peter's question. His reverence is revealed in his words. The disciples never regarded Jesus as precisely like them or their equal. At every point in their association they reveal their instinctive reverence for their Master. Peter is the one who most of all displays this mood. He is reverent in his relations with Christ. We cannot gain the full spiritual benefit from our relations with Christ unless we revere him as Master and Lord.

When a blessing was coming, Peter wanted it all. If a consecration was to be made, he was prepared, at least in his eager words, to go the entire limit. No fragments suited him; nothing but the whole loaf was his demand. At least in his promises Peter held nothing back. It is a manly response. God can do everything with fully consecrated lives; and much of our offering is so stingy!

This scene is one of the great revelations of the inmost nature of Jesus. When there was no servant to do it and a humble task was therefore not being accomplished, it was he who took the basin and towel and did the work quietly and graciously himself. This is the sacrament of service. Jesus never was greater in any human situation, except his

death, than he was here in the chamber with his friends, doing the humblest duty for them in the holiest spirit. This is the revelation of the heart of God and the definition of the law which ought to be the guide of everyone in daily life.

Seventh Week, Fourth Day: "The Sifting"

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.—Luke 22: 31-34.

Peter's boast of loyalty to death is so consistent with his character as we have studied it! Whenever there is an opportunity to rush into a situation and head up a movement, there he is, leading the van. No warning deters him. It seems as if he would have caught the sobering meaning of the Master's hint that he was to be sifted as wheat. But he appears to have lost instantly any sense of caution that might have been awakened, and he is sure that he can go to the limit of prison and death with his Master. Is he simply a boaster? Would he have done better had he kept silent? Being the man he was, could he have kept silent?

The insight of Jesus is shown in his kind and warning counsel to his impetuous disciple. He was frank with him, telling him that temptations were coming which would sift the wheat from the chaff of his life and make him worth something to God and his fellow-men. This was faithful dealing with Peter. It would have been easier to have said pleasant words only; but that would not have helped in the process of bringing Peter out of Simon.

But Jesus was also reassuring. He told Peter that he would win the battle by the power of a steadfast faith. Jesus always dealt with people on the basis of hope. The accent of despair never is once heard in the talks which Jesus had with all kinds of people in all sorts of circumstances. The Master's glorious optimism, which never blinks the facts or ignores the conflict, is like the morning light to weary watchers for the dawn. Such superb hopefulness brings courage and a

renewed determination to keep up the fight. When Jesus speaks to us we feel that there is only one thing to do; we must go forward.

Then Jesus told Peter that he would gain something from his struggle that would be vital in the experience of others. He was not fighting alone. The welfare of those whom he did not know and might never see was bound up with his victory. Peter's brave fight was to become the source of courage and strength to his brethren. How true this statement is! The number of souls that have been steadied in their wavering hours by the example and victory of Peter cannot be counted. How our battle goes is not our concern alone. *Others lose or win according to the way we fight.*

Seventh Week, Fifth Day: "The Denial"

And they that had taken Jesus led him away to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter followed him afar off, unto the court of the high priest, and entered in, and sat with the officers, to see the end. . . . Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilæan. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.—Matt. 26: 57, 58, 69-75.

What a tragic contrast lies in the words "afar off" when we compare them with the recent boast, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death" (Luke *22*: 33). The boastful comrade in suffering has become the idle spectator following afar off.

How could Peter have done this? When his mother asked him a similar question about a wrong act, a small boy answered with great sincerity, "Easy, Mamma, easy."

Let us not be too severe in our judgment of Peter. Do we not make similar and almost as great mistakes? Note the occasion of the denial. It was a situation in which it would cost Peter something to be loyal to Jesus.

And it was a fair question as to whether Peter's championship at this time would have done Jesus any practical good. He was on trial in the palace and a rumpus in the courtyard might have done injury to him. Did Peter reason the matter out in this way; or did he just collapse without any reflection as to the situation or its consequences?

He broke down before a girl's ridicule. It seems so useless! Perhaps if it had been a conspicuous place in which he was being tested out, Peter would have stood firm as a rock for his Master. If they had called him into the palace and put him on the witness stand, probably he would have given his testimony immediately and positively. But this test was sprung on him suddenly, and he failed when he might have proved his loyalty at such small cost. Three times in succession and each time more disgraceful than the preceding! It is pitiful.

But that figure of the strong man crumpled in grief as he realizes what he has done wins our confidence again. The root of Peter is in Simon still, and it will spring into fruitful life once more, even from the bitter watering of repentant tears. How it costs to fail! When we pay the price of treason with tears we know how bitter it all was.

Seventh Week, Sixth Day: "At the Empty Tomb"

She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew

not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home.—John 20: 2-10.

If the fact of the denial of his Master by Peter had become known by the disciples it surely had not impaired their confidence in him to any great degree, for it was to him and John that Mary rushed with the news that the tomb was empty. This was in no sense an official superiority, but it was a natural leadership arising from the qualities that Peter had displayed and his nearness to Jesus.

There is no treatment of this incident which can surpass in its insight and suggestiveness the way in which it is handled by Rev. Horace Bushnell in his great sermon entitled "Unconscious Influence." He shows how John and Peter came to the door of the tomb; how John hesitated and Peter rushed in; how John then followed Peter, influenced to do so by his friend's resolute action. Peter did not plan to influence John in this way; John did not deliberate before he responded. Each acted without conscious purpose. Thus, Dr. Bushnell says, we are always silently and mightily shaping each other's lives, not by what we decide to do, but by the way we act, without any conscious purpose to affect the lives of others. Review the most important decisions which you have made. Did you appreciate that they were such at the time? Were the influences acting upon you then those that had been deliberately arranged for? Or were they of the kind that may be classed as "unconscious influence"? The way in which to exert a constant unconscious influence for Christ upon others is to keep ourselves tuned to a high pitch of personal loyalty to the Master. Those who put forth the strongest influence for Christ do not constantly plan to do it; they simply keep themselves so spiritually "fit" that they do it all the time and without planning to do it at all.

Seventh Week, Seventh Day: "The Last Command"

So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John,

lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?—John 21: 15-17; 20-23.

Three times the question, "Lovest thou me?" is pressed home to Peter's mind, a keen reminder of the three times that he had denied Jesus. The time has come for him to be certain beyond any possible doubt that he is loyal to his Master with a love that could endure all tests and strains. There is only one force that can hold one steadfast through every possible experience—it is the power of love. Peter came at last to the point where he could repeat three times his final confession of faith, which was an expression not of a doctrine about Jesus, but of personal love for Jesus. Then the Master knew that he could be depended upon for all the days to come.

The question that came to Peter's lips regarding John was natural. He desired to know what his comrade was to do. Then he would have a standard for guidance. But Jesus brought Peter sharply up to the fact that he was responsible for his own line of action, regardless of what another disciple was to do. Peter needed to act independently. The standards of others were not to determine his ideals. No feeble imitator of another can ever be a true man.

Peter appears here as the lover, the servant, and the follower of Jesus. The last is the most significant. To follow Christ does not mean to imitate him in any slavish way, but rather to act from the same great motives which controlled him in his unselfish and happy life. Can we honestly accept

for ourselves these three names—lover, servant, follower of Christ?

The sublime picture of Jesus in this scene commands our reverence. He dares to make himself the center around which the love and the action of others may gather. He is supreme in the thoughts and deeds of those who accept his mastership. Jesus assumes this place of moral and spiritual sovereignty with no apology. He takes it by native right. Have we accepted this claim of his and are we living in loyalty to it?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

In selecting those features of the character of Peter that seem most worthy of study, we are struck by the wealth of material at hand. He is presented to us in almost every phase of his development. And the impression of his large humanity is clear. He is a living man. We can match every characteristic by some experience out of our own lives that corresponds to it with almost startling vividness.

That struggle of the worse and the better man in him is so like our own conflicts! At one moment the possible Peter stands out as clear as a mountain after a shower; then in a moment the clouds of treachery and profanity shut it all out of view. He can frame a creed that is sufficient for the ages to think about at one instant; at the next Jesus has to shock him back into reverence by calling him Satan. It is just such a confusion of the two natures struggling within us as we all understand.

There is a fine test of the character of a true creed in the Master's words to Peter at the time he made the Great Confession. Jesus speaks about building upon him and his creed. It is an excellent test. *We never really believe anything fully until we do build our lives upon it.* That is a fair test to apply to our confessions of faith. Are we actually building character upon them? Do they lie beneath the activities of everyday life as durable and deep foundations? If they do, we may feel sure that they are creeds in the true sense of the word. For a confession of faith must have power in it to change life and create character. That which we believe in this way makes a difference in our lives; and only that which makes such a difference is true for us.

Jesus knew the value of experience when he told Peter that after he had been through the deep waters of repentance he must strengthen his friends. And yet how strange it is that we are all bound to be explorers for ourselves! All the warnings that are issued by our comrades who have been through the way of discipline and pain do not deter us from exploring the unknown path. So, while Peter could issue his warning, he could not save an unwilling comrade from going past the danger sign if he chose to do so. In spite of its limits, however, the help of those who have met and passed through deep temptation counts for something in our moral struggle. We do learn something from example. Peter could strengthen his brethren better after his trial than he could have done if he never had suffered.

The coward is latent in the best of us. Cowardice is one of the strongest forces that are at work in the destruction of character. But the best soldiers tell us that they were afraid to the point of trembling before the battle began. The man who seemed to have no fear whatever was not the most effective soldier; it was the man who dreaded to go in and then went through in spite of his fear who fought best. To feel fear is no wrong; the failure lies in yielding to it, so that we do not do our duty when the call to battle comes. It is possible to overcome our fears somewhat by sternly conquering them in the struggle; but it is quite likely that we never shall cease to tremble. Probably it is better that it should be so. We learn how much we depend upon help from God.

How wisely Jesus led Peter along in the way of teaching and service. He never shielded him so completely that the winds of temptation did not whip him into consciousness of his weakness. But when Peter lost his nerve and failed, the Master helped him to recover. So Peter learned his lessons and profited by his experiences, until at last he was master over himself. It cost bitter tears and many a conflict, but the reward was worth the struggle.

When at last Simon had become Peter the sum could have been represented mathematically by such a statement as this: Simon + Jesus = Peter. There had been something more than a mere development in the process. The latent Peter in Simon did not work out under merely natural conditions and with no external aid. *Jesus added himself to Simon in order to*

make Peter possible. There came a new energy into the movement of Simon's life; it was personal; it was nothing less than Christ himself. Perhaps we can discover an explanation of this fact in the terms of psychology. But whether we can or not, the fact itself is perfectly apparent. Jesus tried to indicate it by the illustration of the branch and the vine; he asserted it in his words about his "abiding in" his disciples. These deepest experiences of the spiritual life never can be put into definitions. They can only be described. Therefore when we say that Jesus adds himself as personal power to the struggle of those who are living in loyal allegiance to him, we are trying to express a fact of experience in the terms of a sum in arithmetic. It is a poor figure at best, as are all others which can be employed to explain one of the most rich and real occurrences in the development of the soul. But it is something that can be enjoyed by everyone, and the understanding of it is not necessary to the experience.

The noblest line in the character of Peter is his personal love for Jesus, that made him ready to go anywhere or do anything that would serve his Master's cause. It is love of this kind that holds the kingdom of God together. And there is no higher use of one's life possible than to devote it to service for Christ. This is what gives precision of aim and joy in work to Christian disciples. They find that Peter's way is the only one that brings meaning and satisfaction into the day's work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How does one really fashion a confession of faith? Write in the simplest form you can what you believe, testing each item by whether or not it is a working principle in your daily life.

2. What service in modern life is like that which Jesus performed for the disciples; and how can we best render it in our own circle?

3. What are some of the experiences that sift the modern Christian as wheat?

4. What is real repentance?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

SIMON PETER

1. A fisherman, rough and impetuous, but capable of becoming the *Rock*.
2. Ready to put his faith into the form of an affirmation as the spokesman of the disciples.
3. Not contented with half-way measures of any sort.
4. Impetuously denying Christ, then repenting and weeping bitterly.
5. Becoming finally the durable foundation character, able to strengthen his brethren and feed the flock of Christ.

JESUS

1. Discerning the man's better nature, calling it into action and working with Simon to help him to become Peter.
2. Accepting the title *Christ* and declaring that those who were united in him should finally conquer evil.
3. Showing by personal example that the test of true greatness is the service that it can render to those who need help.
4. Forgiving the traitor.
5. Making love for him the supreme motive of the highest service that can possibly be rendered to others.

CHAPTER VIII

Jesus at the House of Simon

DAILY READINGS

Eighth Week, First Day: "The Alabaster Cruse"

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.—Luke 7: 36-38.

At an Oriental feast there was no such privacy as we demand in our homes. The public was permitted and expected to watch the guests. It was quite good form to enter the room and to approach as close to a guest as the woman came to Jesus. The feasters reclined on couches instead of sitting on chairs; therefore it was easy to come closely into contact with the feet of a guest. As one entered the house, the sandals were taken off and a servant poured fresh water over the feet, in order to remove the dust and to cool them. This was an act of courtesy which would not be neglected by a true host.

It was therefore perfectly possible for this woman to come into Simon's house and to approach Jesus, although she was not an invited guest. We do not know when or how Jesus and the woman had met. It is most likely that they were not strangers. Her act would not be reasonable, except on the ground of some previous acquaintance. We know that Jesus was constantly among the people and that he was especially attractive to those whom men generally despised. So it is most reasonable to think that in some way Jesus had laid his strong hand on this woman's life and had changed its current and direction. For this she was unspeakably

grateful. When she saw an opportunity to express her gratitude, she took advantage of it.

So she brought the most precious thing that she owned and, utterly regardless of criticism or cost, she broke the flask of perfume over the neglected feet of the Master. This woman represents all those loyal lovers of Christ who stand ready to give him as a sign of their devotion and gratitude something that really costs. Devotion that involves no expense means nothing. It is an easy matter to give Christ the odd ends of our hours and the waste products of our powers. But are we giving Christ something that is truly precious and involves sacrifice? He deserves nothing less than the supreme treasure of the soul.

Eighth Week, Second Day: "The Critic's Opportunity"

Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.—Luke 7: 39.

The Pharisee had done nothing to protect his guest from contacts which called out his self-righteous criticism. Of course, no Pharisee would have permitted himself to come into contact with anyone who bore the reputation of this woman. The Pharisee believed that the genius of religion was separation. Therefore he emphasized, as giving his religion its sanction, the number of human relations from which that religion shut him out.

Jesus had the other point of view. He estimated the worth of his religion by the number of wholesome relationships and useful services that it enabled him to form and render. He knew what kind of a woman was standing at his feet far better than the Pharisee understood her. Simon was accepting the judgment of the community; Jesus was guided by his knowledge of the motives of her life. The proud and pious Pharisee drew his garments aside, that they might not touch those whom he branded unclean; Jesus extended the folds of his seamless cloak to cover all penitent and seeking souls who needed his pardon and help.

We can easily imagine how the woman suffered, as she heard the names by which she was called in the community. It only intensified her bitterness and confirmed her in the way she was living. The more plainly the community calls its unfortunate members hard names, the wider is the gulf between those who can help and those who ought to be saved. Giving people hard titles does nobody any good.

Jesus was obliged to meet criticism at Simon's feast because his action ran counter to the conventional standards. Jesus had not broken over the customary ways of treating the outcasts of the community for the mere pleasure of being a social rebel; he had not met the woman when he was "slumming." He had found her at the point of her deepest desire, because he was the Saviour of the world. This compelled him to break to pieces some of the conventional social standards. The Master's critics did not understand his ideal of the worth of the soul and the brotherhood of men. It is impossible now to act wholly from motives identical with his and not be misunderstood and criticized. What shall we do when our Christian ideal contravenes the popular judgment as to what is socially "good form"?

Eighth Week, Third Day: "The Parable of the Forgiven Servants"

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on. A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.—Luke 7: 40-43.

Imagine the quiet courtesy with which Jesus spoke to Simon. There was nothing loud or harsh about his tone or manner. But the Master was deeply sensitive to the personal slight that he had received, and he was too much of a gentleman to ignore it or to complain about it.

Once more we see the skill of Jesus in using a simple story to express the truth which he is seeking to make clear and forceful. He might have stated in abstract terms the princi-

ple that gratitude is measured by forgiveness and made no deep impression; but when he put it into the form of a story his shot went home instantly.

In sharp contrast with the directness of Jesus appears the prudent and non-committal character of Simon. He must have discerned in an instant the meaning of the story as applied to the circumstances under which it was told; but he answered with the guarded caution of the trained debater and business bargainer. "I suppose" is the admission of the patent truth; but it leaves a way of retreat open. It is the reluctant and hesitant answer of caution. Jesus replies to it with a characteristic affirmative statement. He never is afraid to go on record. Jesus *declares;* he does not *suppose.*

We must measure gratitude by the standard of the benefit that we have received. It is impossible to respond to great kindness with a thankless heart if we are true to our best ideals. But it is somewhat difficult to make real to ourselves the fact of the divine forgiveness. We are living in an age when the sense of sin does not seem to be as vivid as once it was. Young people are seldom brought face to face with the meaning of moral and spiritual transgression. Do you feel the pardon of God for your sins as an essential part of your religious experience?

Eighth Week, Fourth Day: "The Sacrament of Love"

And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.—Luke 7: 44-46.

Having prepared the way, Jesus is now ready to bring Simon face to face with his social discourtesy. He had not asked Jesus to be his guest because he was the Master's friend. The invitation must have been prompted by curiosity or by such an ambition as leads social "climbers" to ask the "lions" of the day to their tables. If Simon had been entertaining a real friend, he would have had a servant at the

door to take off the hot sandals and pour cool water over the feet of the guest. He would have met his friend with the Oriental salutation of peace, and a kiss to express his affectionate welcome. Then he would have provided perfumed ointment for his guest's hair, as a still further sign of his hospitality and welcome. But all these courtesies had been neglected.

Jesus had made no sign of his personal feelings in the matter. He had himself in perfect control. But when he did speak it was with a directness which must have brought the blush of shame to Simon's cheeks. Jesus did not hesitate, or fail to call a spade a spade. Instinctively we feel that Simon is being treated fairly and fearlessly. Jesus is a master hand at direct dealing with a situation.

He shows Simon the difference between formal courtesies and the acts of love which may be called "sacramental." Suppose that Simon had observed all the formalities which were appropriate to the occasion; they might have been empty of any real meaning. But this woman poured into her act the utmost love and loyalty of which her heart was full. So her deed became the "outward sign of an inward grace." It was a symbol of those deeds which Jesus made the inevitable expressions of loyalty to him when he described the final judgment in Matt. 25: 31-46. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." We are thus under perpetual obligation to render to others such service as we would gladly do for Jesus were he beside us now. Believing this, no lover of Christ would ever overwork another man, crowd him into an unsanitary tenement, or cramp his childhood in a mill. To rob another of a living wage or to poison him with impure food is to treat Christ that way. All living is sacramental.

Eighth Week, Fifth Day: "Forgiven"

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.—Luke 7: 47, 48.

The passage for the day is brief; but it is packed full of meaning. Jesus makes no effort to apologize for the past life

of the woman. He admits that her sins are many; on the other hand he intimates clearly that the gross sins of Simon are few. The contrast is not in the different degrees of forgiveness, but in the measure of honor and love that each has shown him. Note the fact that Jesus does not hesitate to make himself the object of human love. He asks, by reasonable implication, first place in the affections of his disciples. Are we right in claiming for Jesus Christ the first place in the affections of men today?

Then Jesus proceeds to declare that the sins of the woman are forgiven. There is no apology for this statement on Jesus' part. He does not make it with any mental reservations. He does not say whether the heavenly Father forgives her sins or whether he forgives them. He simply affirms with absolute decision that the woman's sins are forgiven. Are we justified in looking to Jesus Christ by faith today for the forgiveness of sins? What aspects of the Master's character are revealed by this scene?

The path of love is the way to forgiveness. We do not always approach the matter in this way. We think that the first step in the process of forgiveness is profound sorrow for sin and radical, thorough repentance. But Jesus understood how these both spring out of love. It is when we are sensitive to personal love for Christ that we hate the sins that separate us from him. The more we love the beautiful in music or in painting, the more we shall scorn the discordant and the ugly. Our quest of moral excellence is under the same law. When we are controlled by active love for virtue we hate vice. This principle is of the highest practical value in moral training and in the cultivation of our personal character. The surest way in which to help children to avoid evil is to inspire in them the love of the good. In our personal struggle to overcome temptation it is futile to dwell constantly on the sin that is to be avoided; we shall succeed best when we keep clearly before us the good that is to be sought.

Eighth Week, Sixth Day: "Who, Then, Is This?"

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins?—Luke 7: 49.

The question that was asked at Simon's table has been put in unnumbered ways since then, and is still the great interrogation. "Who is this?" There are many answers. The Church has replied through its great doctrines about the Person of Christ. The theologians have answered through their attempts to explain the mission of Jesus to the mind, heart, and conscience of humanity. But the best reply to the question comes from those who, like the blind man and the forgiven woman, like St. Augustine and Col. Hadley, repeat the same statement, each in his own tongue, "He is my Saviour and Master."

We often ask, What bearing has my idea about Christ upon the way I live day by day? Many who are known as Christians give the impression that there is no very close practical relationship between a creed concerning Christ and the attainment of a Christ-like character. But as a matter of fact the relation is essential and constantly constructive. What we truly believe about Jesus determines the way in which we accept his motives, act in his spirit and thereby finally grow to be like him. Of course, it is possible to hold a set of merely speculative opinions about Jesus and have life unchanged by the fact. But faith in Jesus Christ is something far deeper than superficial judgments about him. When we truly believe in Jesus as our divine Master, we begin to act habitually under the influence of the same motives as guided him in his earthly life. This is to be "united" with Christ, that is, to be *identified in our ruling motives with Jesus.* And this is what finally and naturally produces the Christian character. A Christian is not a magical or artificial product. He is the certain result of definite causes, working according to natural laws. The motives that actuated Jesus, placed at the center of our daily activity, produce the kind of a life that Jesus lived and create the Christian character. But we never enthrone these purposes in our conscious activity unless we believe that they were vital with Jesus. So it is our faith in him which leads us to union with him.

Eighth Week, Seventh Day: "The Parting Blessing"

And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Luke 7: 50.

Jesus' benediction must have been spoken so clearly and plainly that all the guests could hear. He gave the sinful woman his blessing, and she went away from Simon's house forgiven and at peace. The guests had criticized Jesus for daring to forgive sins. He refused to be drawn into any discussion of the question. Note this aspect of his character; he always kept the main issue to the front and declined to be diverted by any kind of a fruitless debate. So he declared now in the presence of the guests at Simon's table that the woman had been "saved by faith."

This was apparently an effort on his part to fix the minds of all who heard him upon the importance of personal trust in him. "Faith" as Jesus used it here certainly does not mean a set of unproved opinions about Jesus; it is not credulity; it is a personal act by which this woman, in loving confidence, gave herself up to Christ and trusted him. She yielded her life to his mastery; she accepted his love as her law. Thus she was saved. The object of her trust was Jesus, her personal Master.

The words "go in peace" were used as the common form of farewell. But surely as Jesus used them to the woman, they were filled with a new value and meaning. Christianity does precisely this; it takes such words as "love," "joy," and "peace" and makes them mean more than they ever did before. So the woman left the presence of the Master and the unfriendly stare of her critics with the songs of a new life singing in her heart. The days might be long and the burdens heavy; but they could all be met bravely now. Like the Woman of Samaria, she had found the radiant path into a new world.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

The scene in Simon's house is full of delicate touches, which make it an attractive and fruitful subject for study. The play of feeling throughout the dinner hour is varied and deep. One feels as if he had watched the swift movement of a dramatic situation as he recalls the items in order.

First, the character of Simon appears in sharp definition. He is a shrewd man, deeply interested in the events of the day and sure not to miss entertaining the lecturers from abroad and the grand opera stars. It redounded to his

reputation when rumor said that Simon the Pharisee had entertained more distinguished guests at his table than any other man in the city. It was worth all it cost.

There was nothing personal in it. If the guests came to dinner and the public knew it, that was enough. So Simon forgot those acts of courtesy which are the expression of a noble and affectionate nature. He was satisfied, so long as he stole a march on a competitor for social prestige. This accounts for his rudeness to Jesus.

But Jesus appreciated the situation in a moment. Perhaps none of the other guests had noticed the failure of Simon to add that little personal touch of attention and honor which seemed so slight and bulked so large. But the Master felt it. He had all the accurate and immediate instincts of a gentleman. The failure to treat him with the complete attention of refined courtesy was not simply an affront to his personal honor; it was an indication of a sordid soul in Simon. Lacking all the training of the court and high society, Jesus never fails in that instinctive courtesy which is the mark of a well-bred man. He proves that good manners and gentle courtesy are first of all determined by a loving heart and not externally by practice in the school of correct behavior.

Perhaps this instinctive tendency to do the chivalrous act was one of the reasons that led Jesus to be loved by the down-and-outs. Surely there was something most extraordinary in him that led the real sinners to trust him. Who of all those outside the social pale must be approached with such delicacy as a woman like this? But Jesus had somehow made his influence felt in the case of this woman and she had given him her confidence. It was utterly unusual. Imagine her trusting one of the priests! She would never have come within speaking range of one of these high officials in religion. But in his close relations with the common people, Jesus had found her. It is an illuminating example of his approachableness. He was hedged about by no barriers. He did not wait for sinners to come to him; he went to them. His very presence among the common folk was like the word "Come" written in letters of light and love.

The social consternation and religious surprise at the act of the woman touches the scene with that delicious humor which is always present in the Bible. We can see the leaders of society whisper their amazement to their neighbors on

the couches. The holy indignation of the Pharisees blazes as hotly as the amenities of the situation will permit. There is a buzzing all along the line as the proprieties receive a rude shock. It is all so contemptible and petty! And on the background of this artificial and ridiculous indignation, the woman pours out her gift unconcerned and Jesus receives her expression of love and gratitude without being disturbed. Love is always natural and spontaneous; hypocrisy is generally in good form and always artificial.

Jesus was an adept at putting a lesson in the form of a story. All masters of the art of expressing truth in popular form have done this. Lincoln was one of the most proficient users of this art. A story will point a truth as a formal proposition cannot. The conclusion is always self-evident and the appeal is to common sense. The story that Jesus uses is commonplace in its simplicity. But it shot the lesson home to Simon's mind, and the shaft was barbed. A lecture on the relation of motives to good manners could not have done the business half so well. Jesus was a great Teacher.

It is interesting to notice that Jesus said to the woman, "Go in peace." It was no place for her to remain. Jesus had no foolish notions regarding social custom. The woman was not a guest at Simon's banquet; she did not belong there for any length of time. Jesus recognized this fact, and was as thoughtful of Simon's rights as host as Simon had been careless of Jesus' privilege as guest. So the woman went away; but she went away forgiven. With our modern slight emphasis upon the tragedy of sin, we tend to hold forgiveness in slight regard. We do not talk about it much. It is seldom reckoned highly as a spiritual asset. But to this woman walking back to the street again, to the streets where her miserable existence had been spent so wretchedly before she met the Master, forgiveness meant a new world. There was light in the darkness now, peace in the troubled ways, and joy in the sordid contacts which now she had the power to spurn. She was one of the early witnesses to the power and beauty of the divine forgiveness through Christ.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How can the individual Christian and the Church be

of redemptive service to the outcast life of the community? Is it true that Christians are not generally sensitive to their responsibility toward the vicious elements in the community?

2. Is it the religious duty of every Christian to be a gentleman?

3. In what ways can we express publicly our love and gratitude to Christ?

4. How can we realize the fact of forgiveness in our personal spiritual life?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

THE WOMAN

1. Finding and loving Christ in the midst of an evil life.
2. Expressing her gratitude at any cost.
3. Forgiven and restored to a new life.

SIMON

1. Rich, socially ambitious.
2. Careless in regard to those courtesies which only a sincere and loving heart can render.
3. Rebuked and humbled at his own table by the truth brought home by a simple story.

JESUS

1. The perfect gentleman.
2. Finding and knowing the worst people in the community as well as sitting with the most respectable at dinner.
3. Teaching the profoundest lessons by means of the simplest stories.
4. Going with unerring instinct to the heart of an act and discerning its motive.
5. Forgiving sins.

CHAPTER IX

Jesus at Home in Bethany

DAILY READINGS

Ninth Week, First Day: "The Better Part"

Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—Luke 10: 38-42.

Martha appears to be the head of the household, perhaps because she is the elder of the sisters. She is in charge of the entertainment, and evidently feels that she must prepare the best that can be furnished for the comfort of the Guest. But she was distracted by her labor. An elaborate dinner could not be prepared without heat and hurry and worry. Martha was not wrong in her desire to express the family hospitality in the best possible form. Her mistake lay in such an over-doing of her duty that she missed the privilege of being with Jesus. In her case the good became the enemy of the best.

On the other hand, Mary appears at first glance careless of her real domestic responsibilities. She does not seem to be doing her fair share. Instead of helping prepare an elaborate meal, she sits in the room with Jesus, eagerly listening to what he has to say. She is furnishing her mind and soul with treasures that never can be taken away from her. Mary

was acting according to her sense of proportion and value in life; she was putting first things first. Whether the dinner should have two or six courses she considered to be a matter of small importance; whether or not one caught the true vision of life from Christ seemed to her to be supremely important. This accounts for her action.

Over against the distraction of Martha the calmness of Christ stands out more sharply defined. He does not reprove Martha for her complaint against her sister; he only tells her that one course is enough for dinner and that Mary has chosen, not the *only* but the *better* part. Jesus never let himself be torn asunder by conflicting duties or emotions. He kept his balance in every situation where less thoughtful men would have lost their self-control.

May we not pray: *Help us, our heavenly Father, to find the true values in our duties, so that we may live calmly and actively day by day. May we unite the hour of toil with the time of reflection, so that we may be happy and efficient in doing thy will.*

Ninth Week, Second Day: "The Dead Friend"

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was. . . . Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.—John 11: 1-6; 14, 15.

Lazarus moves through the later part of the Master's life with an almost unnatural mystery and majesty. He is silent and significant in the story. The events connected with his life aroused great popular interest in Jesus; they also crystallized the plots of Jesus' enemies to bring about his death.

Brief as the reference is, however, there is enough in the record to reveal the outlines of Lazarus' character. *Jesus loved him.* What description could be more concisely clear? Lazarus was a man whose character was such that he won the intimate and loyal personal affection of Jesus. The Master loved all sorts and conditions of men; but the word *love* as it is used here expresses, not pity for a sinner or compassion for an enemy, but friendship of the most genuine kind, based on mutual respect. So Lazarus was the kind of a man whom Jesus could honor with his personal love. Therefore he must have been clean and good and brave; he must have been noble and useful and happy.

It was a distressing experience for Jesus to hear that Lazarus was dead. To lose a friend or one of our family circle tests us to the limits of faith and courage. No doctrine of the divine Christ alters the fact that Jesus suffered intense sorrow when he knew that Lazarus was dead. He could not have displayed the deep feeling that he did unless he had really felt it; for Jesus never acted a part. Yet Jesus discerned the hidden purpose of good behind it all, and so he accepted the experience as containing a revelation and a blessing. This is one of the most noble and helpful expressions of human courage in the presence of profound sorrow that we know.

In a letter from a home into which death had entered and a son had been taken, the writer spoke of the experience being met "in the grace of an accepted sorrow." There was no rebellion; but there was a deep and terrible sense of loss. There was no despair; but there was unspeakable loneliness. So grief comes into our everyday life and we must bear it as Jesus endured the news from Bethany.

Ninth Week, Third Day: "The Resurrection and the Life"

Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house. Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto

her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world.—John 11: 20-27.

Martha hurries out to meet Jesus. As when she was entertaining him, so now when she is sunk in sorrow, she must be alert. She cannot sit down and think her sorrow through; she must put her hand to specific tasks and work her trouble out. She does not do this in order that she may forget, but as a welcome relief from the pressure of her sorrow and a means of expressing her suffering in action.

Mary sits quietly at home thinking about the meaning of the experience through which she and her sister are passing. This does not mean necessarily that she is morbidly brooding on the death of her brother. Martha works out her problem; Mary thinks hers out.

Jesus meets the experience in still another way. He yields to the sorrow; but he is calm and sure in the presence of death. Then he dares to speak with an accent that never had been heard before in all the weary centuries during which men had wrestled with the problem of death. "I am the resurrection and the life" is a new note in the faint former music of human hope and yearning. Jesus faces the ultimate mystery and with divine audacity dares to declare that he himself is its solution. Thereby he makes his own character the central fact in the religion that bears his name. And he has been able to vindicate his claim in the life of mankind for almost twenty centuries. Millions of men and women have been assured of their immortal life because of the words and personal experience of Jesus. He has brought confidence and courage into countless houses of sorrow from the day he entered the mourning group at Bethany until now.

Note that perfect tense in Martha's words, "I have believed." She says, "Yes, I have believed in the past; and I really believe now; but what I need just now is to have my faith so confirmed that it shall become a living force in my life." How truly this answer reflects our common feeling as we meet any searching experience! We have the warrant of our past faith; it holds good; but we need a certainty and strength that will help us over the hard places immediately

before us. And when we throw ourselves upon Christ in utmost confidence the needed strength comes. This is a confirmed fact of experience that we cannot doubt.

Ninth Week, Fourth Day: "Jesus Wept"

Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?—John 11: 32-37.

Compare the way in which Martha and Mary met Jesus. Both exclaimed, "O, if only you had been here, Lazarus would not have died." But Martha adds her faint hope that Jesus may yet do something to help them. It is her way. She is the energetic worker; she cannot give up hope.

On the other hand Mary has accepted the situation and nothing but her tears are left. No hope was left and no help was asked. She was resigned and chastened.

"Jesus wept." It is the shortest verse in the Bible that records this fact. It is also one of the most precious. It lets us look into the heart of Christ. We discover his human sympathy; we see him in the finest expression of his personality, suffering with others.

This power to appreciate the sorrows of the world and to express genuine sympathy in natural ways is one of the most necessary qualities in Christian character. Effusiveness and sentimentality are, of course, undesirable. But a hard and cynical temper in the presence of human sorrows is inconsistent with the true Christian ideal of life. Jesus never let his feelings run away with his control of himself or the leash of his reason; on the other hand he gave full expression to his emotions and was not ashamed of his tears.

Young men often yield to the tendency to steel themselves, when they meet the experiences that appeal to the emotions and call out expressions of grief; they think that it is manly

to be stoical when their eyes ought to be wet. But nothing is more truly manly than to appreciate and sympathize with the suffering of the world. When we do not react with personal sorrow to the staggering grief of a comrade we have failed to be his friend in the best sense of the word. The strongest men are the tenderest. Recall the fact that Jesus' triple command to Peter to serve him was based upon the apostle's affirmative reply to the question, "Lovest thou me?" *Emotions get results as well as right ideas.*

Ninth Week, Fifth Day: "An Empty Tomb"

So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.—John 11: 41-44.

The scene is set forth with all apparent accuracy of detail. Lazarus is dead and has been buried. Death was there in all its stark reality.

Jesus looked up toward the sky in prayer as he faced this situation. He spoke words of gratitude and humility. He was confident that his Father heard him; he was sure that his mission to the world would be confirmed. The Master's habit and method of prayer are among the most prominent marks of his character. He moved through his earthly life with serene confidence and unfailing power because he was always sure of his union with God. Nothing interrupted this relationship.

Then Jesus exerted his power. His prayer was the act preceding his power; his power issued from his prayer. The souls of men are within the grasp of his mighty authority. The man of power is not the one who can command fleets and armies; the true master is he who can exert control over the soul. The spirit of Lazarus heard and obeyed its Lord. It returned and vivified once more the body in which it had dwelt and which it had used to express itself before the

temporary separation which was called death. This is supreme authority, and Jesus displayed it before the tomb of Lazarus.

The practical meaning of this tremendous event appears as we reflect upon the power of Christ to call new energies into action in the field of our everyday living. When the higher powers of the soul lie inert and buried, Jesus appears as the Lord of the spirit and commands them to come forth into conscious life. We are not reducing the scene at Lazarus' grave to an allegory by this interpretation; we are simply finding enlarged meanings in the event. In every soul there are unrealized powers that may be described as dead. No man can face the example and personal challenge of Jesus as Master, without hearing the imperative word. The first demand that Christ makes upon the soul is to be instantly nobler, happier, and more useful. *It is a veritable resurrection of spiritual activities and resources that follows from vital relationship with Christ.*

Ninth Week, Sixth Day: "Love and Treachery"

Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead. So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, that should betray him, saith, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor? Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein. Jesus therefore said, Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying. For the poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always.—John 12: 1-8.

The feast which the fourth gospel describes is quite certainly the one referred to in Matt. 26: 6-13 and Mark 14: 3-9. In the latter, however, Mary is not mentioned by name, while the host is definitely said to be Simon the Leper. He may have been a kinsman of the Bethany household. Mary's gift to the Master at this time was so similar to that of the woman at the feast of Simon the Pharisee, and the

names of the hosts on both occasions are so nearly identical that the inference is often drawn that we have two reports of the same event. But the similarities may be easily accounted for, and the differences are too marked to allow us to regard the two scenes as the same.

It is the character of Mary that stands out clearly here. She brings her gift to Jesus as the expression of the devotion that had led her to listen to his message at Bethany and accept her sorrow without a murmur. The sincerity and beauty of her gift appear all the more clearly on the background of the selfishness and hypocrisy of Judas. He had evidently been stealing from the common treasury of the disciples. His feigned regard for the poor was contemptible. All these facts make the love and devotion of Mary more significant.

How closely love and treachery tread upon one another in our common life! Love thinks in the terms of others; treachery thinks in the terms of self and sin. Mary gave all she possessed at the impulse of love; Judas was thinking at the same time how he might steal a few more pennies.

The time is coming when Christians are going to trade, to amuse themselves, to build and govern cities, to rule their homes, and to enter into all international relations under the sway of such love as Jesus displayed in his glorious human life.

Ninth Week, Seventh Day: "In Peril for the Master's Sake"

The common people therefore of the Jews learned that he was there: and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.—John 12: 9-11.

Lazarus appears again with the indistinct character which forbids analysis, as we have noted before. He had met the supreme event of human life and had come back into his former physical relationships. The question arises, why did he not tell his friends what he had passed through? Tennyson voices this wonder in "In Memoriam:"

"When Lazarus left his charnel-cave
And home to Mary's house returned,
Was this demanded—if he yearned
To hear her weeping by his grave?

'Where wert thou, brother, those four days?'
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbors met,
The streets were filled with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crowned
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist."

But how could Lazarus have told? He had no language to express it, no common experience to which he could refer in making it clear to those to whom he would have spoken. Lazarus' silence does not mean that he, living again in a human body, had retained no consciousness of the interval that had passed when he was called dead. Indeed, the finest tribute to the reality of that experience is the fact that he did not seek to express it in human speech. Lazarus had met death face to face; he could not tell the story. His was the silence of a disciplined soul.

But his experience brought him into physical peril. The officials who were plotting against Jesus dragged him into the range of their schemes. They had no animosity against him personally. Their work was official, and they would rather murder a man than see a tradition in peril. So it cost something in those days to be identified with Christ. Perhaps the Christian life of today would take on added strength if it involved more real sacrifice and suffering. The old days of the arena brought out the strength of the Christian faith. If the simple act of expressing a Christian purpose by signing a card or standing up in a meeting is the substance of what it means to be a Christian, strong souls will not be held long to it. That which costs nothing means little.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

We feel sensitive to the fact that Jesus never had a home of his own. This has often been cited as proof that there was something lacking in his human life that was essential to his perfect manhood. He never knew the responsibility that comes with being the head of a household; he had no wife or child.

But the study of his life reveals all the characteristics of the husband and father. The wonderful insight and chivalry in his treatment of women show that he had all the qualities of the most devoted husband. The way in which the children ran to him indicates that he was the perfect master of the father's heart. And the way in which he took his place in the household at Bethany proves that he missed no essential experience of life because he never was married. On the other hand, his bachelor life was the only one which was consistent under the circumstances. And we must not miss that note of tragic loneliness which we catch when we hear him say on one occasion, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

What a resting place the home in Bethany must have been to Jesus! In spite of Martha's bustling activities, it must have been a place where one could retreat and find all the relief and comfort that love knows how to render to tired friends. And Jesus needed this; for the pressure of his public relations surely brought him sometimes to the point where it was absolutely necessary that he should retreat to the shelter of love and quietness.

> "Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
> After so many hours of toil and quest,
> A famish'd pilgrim—saved by miracle."

There is a beautiful unity in the family group. Each character is strongly individualized; but their love makes them a family together. Each contributes a necessary part to the variety in unity which is essential to a home. And the circle would not have been complete without the Friend. He came and took his place naturally.

Martha has been censured too severely in our thoughtless judgment. She was not a mere bustling fretter. She was a successful home-maker, and her activity was the substance out of which the domestic happiness was largely wrought. As

we have noted, she got her proportions wrong. It is a common fault. The tendency to over-do is as much a fault sometimes as the habit of neglect. Especially is this true, if it involves the loss of something that is essential to the complete life of the group.

Mary, on the other hand, has been held up as the shining example of the reflective mind, as if she did not also know how to cook and serve a good dinner. Mary was thoughtful; but there is no indication that she was either idle or in the way. It is sometimes said that the artisans must sweat in order that the poets and dreamers may eat. But this division is not warranted by anything that we know of the character of Mary. She put the most important thing in the first place; but that is not the mark of a useless dreamer; that is eminent and commendable practical wisdom. In fact, Mary seems to have been one of those persons who balance the vision and the task well in daily life.

Lazarus is little understood. It could not be otherwise, since the narrative gives us almost no natural and concrete details. It is all left to the imagination to fill in. But he must have been a man of rare personality. It is impossible to think of him as talking the cheap gossip of the village or being petty in soul. He was silent in the possession of an unaccountable experience.

Jesus is never represented in a more beautiful way than in this household, except in his contact with children, where his perfect humanity is revealed so delicately. It is an inspiration to picture him at Bethany. We see him first resting with his friends. The perplexing problems are laid aside and he talks with Mary about the lovely things in the world. There is no noise about it. Simplicity and genuineness make the atmosphere in which the restful hour goes by. The Master and his friends are together. What they talk about is not so important as the fact that they are with one another. That is enough.

But we see Jesus also at Bethany in another guise. He is the towering Lord of death. Disease has done its worst to the physical body, and the spirit of Lazarus has not been able to use it any longer. Then Jesus speaks with the accent of divine power and calls the spirit to come back and use the body again. This is the explicit record. Jesus is the Master of all souls, living or dead.

But the third picture is most beautiful. Jesus is the recipient of the love of the Bethany household. When Mary offered her sacrifice of affection she was expressing not only her own devotion, but also the love of the whole group. Jesus is the supreme and worthy object of personal love. This is the imperial glory of his character. He deserves the utmost devotion that loyal hearts know how to render. All the avenues of expression possible are not capable of indicating all the human love of which Jesus Christ is worthy. Our richest gifts fail to utter it all. Jesus merits all possible human devotion.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How does the pressure of modern life disturb our sense of value and proportion? Name some secondary interests which we tend to put first.
2. How can we enjoy the practical benefits of the Christian assurance of immortality? Does it really make a difference in the way we do the day's work?
3. How does experience confirm faith?
4. In what ways are we "stingy" in our gifts to God?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

MARTHA

1. The efficient and successful head of the household.
2. Making the wrong estimate of values and losing the best by her devotion to the merely good.
3. Suffering intense grief and trusting Jesus for help even when the last hope seemed gone.
4. Craving the confirmation of past faith by present experience.

MARY

1. Eagerly listening to Jesus, not to the neglect of her duty, but in the right regard for the relative importance of duties.
2. Resigned in her sorrow.
3. Offering her richest gift to express her love for Jesus.

LAZARUS

1. The man with the experience that cannot be put into words.

JESUS

1. The human friend in the quiet home.
2. The Lord of death.
3. The sufferer in the sorrows of men.
4. The object of the noblest human love.

CHAPTER X

Jesus and the Hungry Crowd

DAILY READINGS

Tenth Week, First Day: "Seeking Rest"

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and outwent them.—Mark 6: 30-33.

It was a time of tension and exhaustion in the life of Jesus. He had received the news of the death of John the Baptist, whom he loved, and to whom he was loyal with all the strength of his heart. It was a distressing experience; it made his remaining friends all the dearer; he needed to be alone with them.

Then the disciples had come back from their mission with eager questions and glowing reports. They needed Jesus to counsel with them about the meaning of their work. That involved their being together, where they could talk quietly.

Meantime the crowd was pressing upon Jesus with their sickness and misery and problems. He could not find time even to eat. So he took a boat with his friends and started across the lake. He would find a place where he might be with them quietly. But the crowd watched the direction in which the boat went, ran along the paths that followed the shore, and, when Jesus and his disciples came to their chosen

spot for conference, many people were already there and more coming.

Did not Jesus have the right to be alone? Ought he not to have insisted upon that right and resented the intrusion of the crowd? It is often said that the social worker and the minister must have time to relax and "unbend the bow." On the other hand, Emerson said, "I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake." And one of the greatest pastors in America once said, "The man who wants to see me is the man whom I want to see." How shall we balance our personal need of relief and rest with the claims of others upon our time and strength?

Probably there were many individuals in the crowd who would have been respectful of Jesus' rights if they had been acting alone; but under the spell of the mob they did what they never would have done singly. In college life, how many times the influence of the mob spirit overwhelms personal standards and purposes, and one surrenders his individuality to the crowd! How often in the country village the "gang" proves too strong for the individual, and he yields his independence! How shall we keep from doing in the crowd what we would scorn to do alone?

Tenth Week, Second Day: "Sheep Without a Shepherd"

And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.—Mark 6: 34.

Jesus had wanted so much to rest and to talk with his friends! But there were the people. They were perplexed in their minds. Probably some of them had also brought such of their sick relatives as could make the journey. What should he do? Probably the need of the crowd was not vocal except for the mere fact of their presence. That was the strongest possible appeal to him. How did it test the Master's unselfishness?

Jesus had seen shepherds among their flocks ever since he was a little boy. He knew how many times the true

shepherd is forced to yield his personal preference and comfort to the needs of the flock. And these people were in dire need. He knew that the priests and their services in synagogue and temple were not touching the problem. He knew that a real religious life could not be kept up on cold laws and dead traditions. Jesus had the "social mind" and this cost him many an hour of comfortable ease.

In a statement of the purposes that have guided his life, Rev. George W. Truett, of Dallas, Texas, said briefly, "I have sought and found the shepherd heart." This explains his deep and wide influence. It was the very genius of the life of Jesus.

Jesus also realized that his sympathy and love must take concrete form and express itself in deeds of actual beneficence. Many times we are sympathetic; but what do we do about it? We are sorry; but we are not sorry "about five dollars worth." A practical situation calling for help stirs our pity; but it does not claim six hours of our time spent in personal service to meet it.

The shepherd heart involves personal sacrifice. Delegated service will not meet the situation. Jesus did not send one of the disciples or even a committee to meet the people. He went himself. He put personality into the service of the people. Thus he was a true shepherd. Can a Christian meet the demands of the age merely by giving money to benevolent causes?

Tenth Week, Third Day: "The Testing of Philip"

Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.—John 6: 5-7.

As evening came on, the disciples saw the practical difficulties in the situation. They suggested to Jesus that the crowd be sent away. He would not accept that solution of the problem. "You give them something to eat," he said.

Jesus put the problem squarely up to Philip. He had his

own plan; but he wanted to make Philip do his own thinking and to develop his initiative. This was the Master's main purpose in his dealing with his disciples. He sought in every way to bring out their resourcefulness.

Philip did not get far in the solution of his problem. All he was able to see was the difficulty; he could show a number of reasons why the thing could not be done; he had no suggestion for the positive doing of the work with which he was confronted. He could calculate impossibilities nicely.

The fact with which Philip had not learned to reckon is the divine *plus* which God is able and willing to write, after we have done the best we can with the resources which we possess. This addition could not be made until he himself should have used all the wisdom and energy that he possessed. Then God himself would "mingle in the game."

When St. Theresa was being ridiculed by her comrades because she dared to undertake an expensive piece of work with only scanty resources, she replied: "With her three shillings Theresa can do nothing; but with God and her three shillings there is nothing that Theresa cannot do."

The watchword of one of our great cities is. "I will." If this is not a mere idle boast, it is a noble expression of what should be the master mood of the Christian. It spells action and resolution; it is the prophet and herald of success. Let us feel the stern and beautiful imperative of Jesus as we face the surging wants of the modern world and add God to the resources with which we may successfully meet the apparently overwhelming task.

Tenth Week, Fourth Day: "The Lad With the Lunch"

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? —John 6: 8, 9.

It is in the fourth gospel alone that we are told that the bread and fish belonged to a boy in the crowd. Someone has called him "the lad with the lunch."

Compare Andrew's action here with that reported in John 1: 40-42, where he found his brother and brought him to

Christ. Evidently Andrew was one of those men who are constantly alert, hunting out new opportunities for service. He brought his report of available resources, *plus* an expressed doubt as to the use to which they could be put in view of the problem. How often men tackle the difficulties in a situation in the same way! But it is better to survey the field and end with a report *plus* a doubt than to give up at the outset and do nothing at all.

In our everyday life we all tend to disparage the slight resources which we possess and can give to Christ. But as a matter of fact, the small things into which love and self-sacrifice have been put become the great means of realizing Christ's purpose for the world. So the women kept their flasks of precious perfume and the boy saved his bread and fish until the time should come when they could be most useful. How much the little things count when they have been consecrated to great ends!

Tenth Week, Fifth Day: "Organization"

And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.—Mark 6: 39, 40.

We generally think of Jesus as a teacher and idealist. He goes among the villages, telling men the good news about God the Father; he stands in close and tender relations with those who suffer and are glad. But here we see him in actual charge of a practical problem where several thousand men and women are to be handled; the children are there also, complicating the task. And he instantly displays the skill of a tactician. He goes at the business with the finest executive control.

First he mobilizes the entire situation. The crowd is divided into companies of fifties and hundreds; they are arranged by divisions on the green grass. Order comes out of chaos, and it is possible to use resources to the utmost advantage. What new aspects of the character of Jesus are revealed by this glimpse of his practical skill?

Imagine the picture that must have been presented by the great crowd as the shadows lengthened at the close of the day. The background for the scene was the hills and the

green grass. The soft colors of the clothing worn by the people, with occasional dashes of color, made the whole landscape look like a great garden of flowers, arranged in beds and blended softly in the waning light.

But Jesus did not make his organization the end of his action. The reason why Jesus organized the crowd was that the disciples might do their work more quickly and efficiently. He set them immediately at the practical work of using his plan. *He planned the work and worked the plan.* If Jesus had seated the people by fifties and hundreds and then had left them just as hungry as they were before he arranged them, it would have been so much wasted energy. He instantly put personality into his organization.

He solved the problem of vitalizing his scheme of work. This is the secret of efficiency. It is like the relation between the body and the spirit. The human body is the most perfect organism which we know. But it must be ceaselessly informed and used by the living soul. As Bishop Brent has said: "Man is not body alone: body without soul is a corpse. Neither is he soul alone: soul without body is ghost. Man is body and soul." This is the secret of successful Christian work, to keep the right relation between spirit and method, between organization and personality.

Tenth Week, Sixth Day: "Consecration"

And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake; and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.—Luke 9: 16.

Jesus is now ready to use the means at his disposal for the purpose of meeting the immediate need of the hour. Before he does anything in a practical way, however, he "asks the blessing." It is the simple ceremony of gratitude and consecration that has been kept up in the Christian practice of "grace before meat." Jesus had an inborn reverence for the Creator and Giver of good. Compare his similar act at the last supper with the disciples in Jerusalem.

This scene has inspired one of our finest hymns, beginning,

"Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea."

It is an example of the true way in which religious forms ought to be used. There is no little impatience with the ceremonial side of religion on the part of many who earnestly seek to preserve the spirit of faith and practice. In one way it is a healthy protest against the inevitable tendency to allow the form to steal into the place of the spirit. But it may be carried too far. Formal expression of spiritual life is always necessary. Take, for example, the so-called "Lord's Prayer." Jesus knew that his disciples needed to be taught *how* to pray as well as inspired to the temper of prayer. So he gave them this form of words. It can be used to the greatest profit; or it can become only an empty form of words, according to the way in which we use it. We need have no fear of hypocrisy if we will use religious forms with the sincerity and naturalness with which Jesus employed them.

Every power and act in the life of Jesus was consecrated to the Father. Perhaps there have been so many "Consecration Meetings" and "Reconsecrations" that earnest and vital persons have grown impatient with the whole subject. But this protest rests upon the abuse of the truth and not on its use in accord with the practice of Jesus. Wordsworth reached a great moment in his life when he felt that he was truly a "dedicated spirit." We cannot pack our consecration into one or more public expressions of devotion; it must accompany all our work and ennoble all our activity. It must find expression in genuine acts of devotion; but it must be the underlying support of our life as a whole.

Tenth Week, Seventh Day: "Conservation"

And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten. When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.—John 6: 12-14.

As we observe how God's gifts are used by men we are struck by two facts: the divine plenty and human waste. God is so bountiful and man is so extravagant! But Jesus set about gathering all the fragments of the food that no

waste might result. It is a question which is the more wonderful, the Master's creative power or his wise economy.

The influence of this attention to details must have been deep on the minds of the disciples. They saw how careful Jesus was even with broken biscuits and fragments of fish. It was a life lesson to them in a practical way. Later they, too, would find that they possessed resources of which they were not aware before their Master's death. They might be tempted to use them recklessly. But the example of the baskets of fragments would come back to their minds and save them from the sin of waste.

The word "Conservation" is a new and significant term in our modern religious vocabulary. It means the gathering up of the spiritual results of a great experience in such a way that nothing will be lost. Churches sometimes pass through a period of revival. An evangelist stirs the community with his message. Decisions for the Christian life are made in considerable numbers. Then the meetings close and the evangelist goes away. Now comes the great problem of conservation on the part of the churches. It is immensely harder to save and construct the immediate results of a "revival" into permanent forces for welfare in the community than it is to organize and carry through the original movement.

The same fact may be urged concerning conventions of young people and student conferences, like those at Northfield, Lake Geneva, and Estes Park. Unless the men and women who go to these places of inspiration come back to their communities and colleges with changed lives, the value of the meeting is open to serious question. The task of conservation is to add the practical to the ideal, to follow up vision with service, to give concrete expression in duties to the inspirations that have come in the conference hall. The peril in every deeper impulse of the spirit is that it will not yoke itself up quickly with duties and deeds that will express it.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

Moving through the crowd which had broken in upon the privacy of Jesus was a boy. There is no record of his name and no description of his appearance. He had with him a basket or package containing food. Perhaps it had been given

him to carry; perhaps it was his own. And the lad and his lunch furnished the point at which Jesus could begin his work for the people. It is another of those unknown, quiet figures that appear in the story of the Master's life, make their contribution to the movement of the whole and then disappear silently into the background. But they are necessary to the unity and movement of the Master's life and work.

The most suggestive item in the study of the week is the way in which Philip, Andrew, and Jesus attack the definite problem of finding sufficient food for the people. Philip sees the problem, but he cannot make the least suggestion as to the way in which to meet it. Andrew sees the problem, finds at least something with which to make a beginning, and then raises the question as to whether or not the thing can be done. Jesus sees the problem, takes the resources at hand, proceeds to organize the distribution of the food in the best way, then adds the resources of God to that which he has already, and behold! the people are fed. This is typical of the way in which different people set to work at a hard task.

First come those who see what needs to be done; but they have no sense of resources. All they can do is to define the problem and tell forty reasons why it cannot be solved. These are the hard-headed people who judge everything by the material conditions in the situation. There were no restaurants in the bare country where the crowd had found Jesus. "Just use your own eyes," say the practical Philip people, "and you will see that these men must go without their supper." And according to the facts in the case, they are right. The work is too great for the resources at hand. One of the easiest things in the world to do is to show how anything is impossible.

Then the Andrew people come along. They begin at once to hunt up resources. If there is no restaurant, there may by chance be a lad there with his lunch. He forms a point of contact; his lunch basket makes a beginning. And sometimes the hardest part of the task is just getting started. The trouble with Andrew was that he did not go far enough in his program. He was as helpless as Philip when it came to making a real beginning. His doubt stalled everything at the outset. He threw cold water on the struggling spark of courage and it died out in an instant.

Then comes Jesus. See how he handles himself and the

situation! One look he takes at the rolls and the fishes; one look at the crowd; then a survey of the men on whom he could depend, and his plan is formed. He whips the confused and hungry crowd into distinct order and hope. They take courage the moment they see him do something. They might have heard Andrew's words; but all he said was, "It can't be done." But Jesus took hold and they were finding places in ordered groups before they could stop to think about the difficulties in providing their supper. They could see that something was taking place, however; it was organization, dedication, and economy working out a big dinner scheme before their very eyes. The boy had the lunch; God had the resources of the universe; and Jesus had the power to form them into a partnership to feed a great crowd of hungry and tired people. The secret of success was utter dependence upon God.

Of course it never could have taken place unless the vision and faith of Jesus had been available for leadership. The sympathy of Christ for a lot of hungry men was the secret of success. It is only such tenderness and sympathy that dares to challenge what men call the impossible and simply compel it to yield. Philip lacked vision and Andrew lacked faith; Jesus had no lack of either. And so the work was done. Love lay at the basis of it. And there is no other force so strong as love for getting hard things done in life. Perhaps it will not multiply loaves of bread in the hands of any one of us in this modern age; but it will do something that is as great. It will take situations that seem to be so difficult that there is no possibility of wrenching success out of them, and it will make them yield. Jesus loved this hungry crowd; this is the supreme truth from which his faith and power came. There were children among them who were ready to cry for their supper. Jesus could not sit idly by and hear little boys and girls beg for bread. The great need of the world for gifts of every kind that will satisfy its mind and heart was present in the throng of people before Jesus. Nothing else so called out his boundless pity and his practical help as the thought and sight of human need. This interprets the matchless humanity of Christ; he was responsive to the call of every human want. Love made him the servant and soldier of all good causes and yearning souls; love won his victories and made him the world's Saviour.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How can we cultivate practical sympathy?
2. Discuss the cultivation of initiative in Christian service. How far can personal responsibility be delegated or discharged by the gift of money or moral support?
3. What are the chief causes of irreverence in present day American life? How does it manifest itself?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

THE CROWD

1. Absorbed in its own questions and needs; forgetting the personal rights of Jesus.
2. Without resources, hungry and dependent, a challenge and opportunity to Jesus and his disciples.
3. Receiving the Master's benefits, but probably in general never experiencing more than the "loaves and fishes."

PHILIP

1. Facing a task with merely the inventory of the items.

ANDREW

1. Developing available resources, but not daring to begin the huge task with them.

THE LAD

1. Bearing his part quietly, probably ignorant of the meaning of his contribution. A case of "unconscious influence."

THE MASTER

1. Suffering sorrow, craving friendship, needing rest.
2. Socially conscious, the great shepherd heart of history, losing his own personal needs in love for the crowd.
3. Developing the initiative and responsibility of the disciples; not doing for them what they ought to do for themselves.
4. A practical organizer.
5. Reverent and grateful to his heavenly Father as he uses the common things of life.
6. Conserving the results of action.

CHAPTER XI

Jesus and Pilate

DAILY READINGS

Eleventh Week, First Day: "Condemned Before Trial"

They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Prætorium: and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the Prætorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover. Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If this man were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee. Pilate therefore said unto them, Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should die.—John 18: 28-32.

It is not an easy task to arrange every detail in the life of Jesus so that the accounts shall harmonize perfectly. In general, however, there is no lack of agreement in the order of the main facts. Pilate was the Roman governor (procurator) in Jerusalem. He was a typical Roman soldier, coarse and cruel, ambitious only to keep his official standing in Rome, hating the Jews and their bothersome religious quarrels, which he did not in the least try to understand. So when the Pharisees disturbed him early in the morning with a legal case and he found that one of their religious customs which seemed to him stupid would not let them come into his courtroom, he went out to talk to them in no pleasant temper. They could not offer him a specific charge, saying only that he must know that they would not have brought Jesus to him unless he were an evil-doer. Pilate must have spoken in an

irritated tone when he told them to take Jesus and judge him according to their own law. We can almost feel the contempt in his voice. He is unwilling to be bothered with their miserable questions of custom and ceremony.

The Pharisees are examples of that strange condition that often arises in religious life when true values are hopelessly confused. Here were men so externally religious that under no conditions would they involve themselves in ceremonial defilement by coming into the presence of the Roman court; and yet at the same moment they had murder in their hearts. To send Jesus to the cross seemed to them to be doing the will of God. To touch something that had been declared to be unclean by a purely external standard seemed to them the unpardonable sin.

This is the mischief of formalism and bigotry in religion. It is easy at this safe distance to censure the Pharisees, but we are never free from the danger of bigotry and externalism in our everyday life. They kept their holiness intact while they murdered an innocent man. Their standard was wrong. We have a better one. Christ has given us a scale of values and a standard for life that will keep us from the sin of these men in Pilate's anteroom.

Eleventh Week, Second Day: "What is Truth?"

Pilate therefore entered again into the Prætorium, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?—John 18: 33-38.

The representative of the greatest political power of history stands face to face with the greatest spiritual Master of time. One is backed by Rome; the other is alone, forsaken by even

his little group of humble followers. No more dramatic contrast is possible. Pilate thinks in terms of the Roman Empire; Jesus thinks in terms of love, brotherhood, and the spiritual Kingdom of God. That their vocabulary should differ, that the interview should be indefinite and unsatisfactory, was inevitable under the circumstances. See Luke 23: 2 for the specific charge that Jesus had called himself "Christ a King." Do not miss the biting scorn in the question, "Am I a Jew?"

Pilate was interested in the matter of the King of the Jews. The word scented of treason and his nose was keen on such a trail. He was on the ground to take care of such matters. So he put the direct question to Jesus with genuine eagerness.

According to the synoptic gospels, the reply of Jesus was "Thou sayest," which means explicitly and positively, *Yes*. The fourth gospel represents Jesus as asking Pilate whether he asked the question on his own initiative or whether some one put him up to it. Naturally this nettled Pilate, and he demanded of Jesus what he had done. Jesus' reply mystified him. This fearless rabbi began to talk about a Kingdom which is not drawn from this world or defended by force. What do you understand Jesus to mean by this? Is there such a Kingdom here on earth now? How does it appear? Who compose it? Are you a member of it? How are its members recruited?

Of course the Roman soldier could not understand: so he came back again with his question, "But are you a King?" He could think only in the terms of Rome, because he had served Rome so long and well. Jesus replies once more in the vocabulary of the spirit. He is a King, indeed, but it is a kingdom of truth in which he reigns. What do you understand to be the *truth* of which Jesus is talking here? And what is it for a person now to be *of the truth?* How does hearing the voice of Jesus depend upon being of the truth? The answer to these questions will help solve Pilate's problem expressed in his words, "What is truth?"

Eleventh Week, Third Day: "Dodging Responsibilities"

And Pilate said unto the chief priests and the multitudes, I find no fault in this man. But they were the more

urgent, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place. But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. And when he knew he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him unto Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem in these days. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was of a long time desirous to see him, because he had heard concerning him; and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. And he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes stood, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers set him at nought, and mocked him, and arraying him in gorgeous apparel sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day: for before they were at enmity between themselves.—Luke 23: 4-12.

So far Pilate has not been able to avoid what is becoming to him an increasing dilemma. If Jesus had stood in the way of his personal ambition, or if the Master had committed himself to a treasonable act, no doubt Pilate would have ordered him to immediate death. But nothing of the sort had been proven. Here was a gentle idealist who talked about a kingdom of truth which was to be maintained without force.

There was a genuine sense of justice in Pilate, even if he had debauched it to selfishness for so long. He must either release Jesus and anger the Jews, or condemn a man who was guiltless. Pilate's repeated attempts to pronounce Jesus innocent served only to increase the determination of the people. They now gave Pilate a hint which seemed to offer relief. They mentioned Galilee; that was under Herod's jurisdiction; here was a way out with the troublesome prisoner. Herod was in Jerusalem; Jesus must be sent to Herod. So the prisoner was hurried away to the King's quarters.

Picture to yourself the silent dignity of Jesus before Herod. The latter was curious to see the Master. He wanted to witness a miracle most of all. Jesus would not talk. There was no response to the royal challenge that he perform a miracle. Was this action of Jesus in the presence of Herod the best method that Jesus could have pursued? Now Jesus is treated cruelly by the soldiers and then sent back to Pilate. A common object of attack makes Pilate and Herod friends again. It is an old and familiar experience.

Among all the temptations that assail us in our everyday life, this tendency to dodge the issue and shift responsibility is one of the most perilous. There can be no strong character that is not tested and developed by the bearing of the burden of personal responsibility. To try to throw it off upon the shoulders of someone else is not only to be a coward, but also to miss one of the most vital means of growth. The only possible way in which we can get ready for the bearing of larger responsibilities is to assume courageously the lesser trusts by which we are being prepared. We are suffering today from the delegation of personal responsibility. We must bring ourselves sharply up to duty and action. We cannot shift the load and be true to Christ.

Eleventh Week, Fourth Day: "Pilate's Lost Opportunity"

And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said unto them, Ye brought unto me this man, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for he sent him back unto us; and behold, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. But they cried out all together, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:—one who for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison. And Pilate spake unto them again, desiring to release Jesus; they shouted, saying, Crucify, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath this man done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him and release him. —Luke 23: 13-22.

The outstanding fact in the day's lesson is the pitiful weakness of Pilate in failing to perform the firm, just act which the situation demanded. His will runs back and forth in a bewildered way between his sense of justice and his cringing fear of a popular demand. Three times he is represented as telling the mob and its leaders that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. The first time he speaks with considerable conviction and somewhat at length. The second effort is not

reported in detail. The third statement is the weakest of the three, beginning with a feeble question.

The most dramatic contrast in the scene is the point at which Barabbas is substituted for Jesus. A confessed rebel and murderer is put into the place of the gentlest soul that ever lived. One whose life was a ceaseless benediction and whose whole character was marked by loyalty and truth was compelled to suffer the penalty inflicted justly upon the worst of criminals. How the contemptible weakness of Pilate appears black and brutal against the quiet loyalty and unchanged resolution of Jesus!

The Roman knew that there was not the least ground for the condemnation of Jesus. But he did not have the courage and resolution to stand up for the truth. Among the influences that acted upon him was his dislike for unpleasant situations. He knew that if he thwarted the will of the religious leaders of the Jews in this case, he would have trouble with them later. They might somehow twist the case into a serious charge against him at Rome. Pilate was too anxious about his personal tenure of office to let anything like this happen if he could prevent it. His seat in the saddle was unstable at best and he did not intend to be unhorsed if political precautions could save him.

We often desire to dodge the disagreeable; we want to escape personal discomfort. Thus we fail to stand up squarely to a duty and we shirk a trust. Recognize the facts, define the responsibility, and then by God's help and with steadfast devotion openly champion the cause that is just and the Christ who is true.

Eleventh Week, Fifth Day: "Washing Away Guilt"

So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye to it. And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.—Matt. 27: 24, 25.

Two phases of the character of Pilate appear in this dramatic scene: He is the victim of cringing fear in the presence of a threatening situation, and he is unable to press

a just decision through to the end. He is a coward because he lacks persistency.

No great leadership is possible unless one is ready to face opposition and meet the howl of the mob with unshaken courage. William Lloyd Garrison might be hauled through the streets of Boston, but he could not be compelled to cease writing and talking against slavery. In the end he was heard because he defied the popular tumult.

Christian leadership calls also for that sort of dogged determination that will not yield even when the last resource seems to be exhausted. When the president of a great corporation was shown a new project, he was told at the end of the conference that the only trouble with it was that it was practically impossible of accomplishment. "O," he said, "is that all? Then let's go ahead and do it." There is hardly a form of Christian enterprise today that is not facing what looks like the impossible. But that is the situation in which Jesus is found as he faces Pilate. The only way in which to deal with the impossible is calmly and courageously to take hold of it and carry it through.

The piece of dramatic stage-play by which Pilate attempts to clear himself from responsibility before the people is both contemptible and pathetic. He was stooping to the same kind of a ceremonial righteousness as that in which the Pharisees indulged. It deceived nobody. Certainly it could have brought little satisfaction to his own conscience. He knew that he had been a coward. He must live with himself, and no amount of water could wash out the memory of the moments that he had spent with Jesus. We may try in every way to set ourselves right socially; but the inner peace that is lost through sin cannot be restored. Sometimes we use prevailing social customs as the water by which we would cleanse our reputation. "Everyone does it; why shouldn't I?" In the end, however, the world places moral responsibility about where it belongs, and men must bear the burden of their misdeeds. "Chickens come home to roost." The clear consciousness of the fact that there is no method of stage performance that will take away the personal responsibility for our actions steadies us as we reflect upon the meaning of our deeds. If Pilate could have been clear on this point, it might have helped him to be just to Christ. As it was, his public performance came too late.

Eleventh Week, Sixth Day: "'Behold, the Man'"

And Pilate went out again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him. Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man! When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Prætorium again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee? Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin. Upon this Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment-seat at a place called the Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the preparation of the passover: it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King! They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified.—John 19: 4-16.

In today's passage we have one of the most striking contrasts which we have seen between Pilate and Jesus. Note the physical comparison. Jesus is worn with physical pain and mental anguish; he is crowned with thorns, robed in the mock garments of royalty, bruised by many blows. Pilate is in physical health, representing the power of Rome. But which is the real man? When Pilate says, "I find him guiltless; but take him and crucify him yourselves," note how he betrays the weakness of his character. If Jesus was innocent he ought to have been released; if he was guilty he ought to

have been punished. But Pilate tried to stand in the compromising position; that is, to pronounce Jesus guiltless and yet do nothing positive to defend and save him. It is impossible permanently to occupy a compromise position.

Note the way in which Pilate descends to threats. But when the suggestion is given him that his favorable treatment of Christ may be construed as a charge of treason at Rome, he betrays his essential cowardice in a moment. All his fears rise up and scream at him.

It seems to us that it ought to have been enough for the mob to have looked at Jesus to be convinced of his nobility and innocence. The friend of the sick and poor, who had never done anything but good to a living soul, stood in the presence of the mob and they were told to look upon him, a man indeed, even in his misery. Could there be a better description of Jesus than that which is contained in the simple term, *the Man?* In all that is written about Jesus as Son of God we must not lose our view of him as our Brother, *the* Man. The priests thought it was a crime worthy of death that Jesus should have dared to claim to be the Son of God. Centuries of human love and appreciation have confirmed his right to both names, the divine and the human.

Eleventh Week, Seventh Day: "Decided, at Last"

And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. And there was written, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title therefore read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but, that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.—John 19: 19-22.

Whether he intended it so or not, certainly the title which Pilate caused to be placed on the cross was one that stung the Pharisees into fury. Probably we are right in thinking that Pilate deliberately intended that it should be so. In this case it reveals the deliberate maliciousness of his mind. Not only did he choose the words, but he saw to it that they were written in all the current languages of the people.

One can almost see his eyes snap as he receives the delegation of the angry Jews. His shot has found its mark. The scorn that he wrote into the title for the cross is blistering the men whom he hated. He has been successful in "getting even."

And now at length he is decided. Having veered to every possible wind that could blow, he finally is positive and determined. But it is too late. The time for him to have exercised decision of character was when Jesus was before him and justice was hanging in the balance. Pilate did not decide upon anything until his own pride and selfish meanness were involved. Then he knew how to be arbitrary to the point of brutal firmness. The words almost crack with intensity: "What I have written stands; don't argue."

Thus we see Pilate representing two traits of character that are often encountered in daily life, namely, revengefulness and stubbornness in cases where personal interests are involved. The tendency to retaliate is almost instinctive and we yield to it, even when we know how futile and unworthy it is. Jesus set the old law of retaliation aside as he gave us the rule for the better way. We simply have not dared as yet to take Jesus at his word and to venture upon the life of love which he promised would be the life of victory.

The second difficulty in our everyday Christian life that the incident suggests is our lack of decisive action at the time when it is most necessary. So often it is only after the critical moment and when our personal interests are involved that we reach our decision concerning Christ. What is needed in every community is the open championship of the Master's cause at the time when it is in a crisis. When the forces of evil are in command, when the honor of Christ is being attacked, these are the times when stout defenders and positive champions are needed. At such decisive moments are we found true to Christ and his truth?

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

The great contrast in this week's study is between a wholly material and a consistently spiritual view of the world. Pilate and Jesus each has his philosophy of life. It enters into every thought and act; it gives color to all the relations that

they bear to the world of men and things. There is no better example of the way in which a person's ruling ideas really rule him than we have in these scenes.

Pilate is the supreme example of the calculating, politic, and completely "worldly" point of view. That is, no action is regarded from any other point of view than the influence which it will have upon some material or physical interest. His yardstick, applied to every motive and deed, is, "What will this do to my standing with the Emperor?" If an idea comes before him he puts it on the witness stand with this question, and it stands or fails according to its relation to his political aspirations and the material interests involved.

When Pilate thinks "kingdom" he sees only so many Roman legions, winning so many victories at such a cost, and extending the boundaries of the empire a little farther. He conceives only of so many taxes, so much graft, and a governor's job, safely held down by himself with increasing revenues and growing favor at the imperial court.

When Pilate thinks "service," he sees a slave on his knees or running with haste to do the will of his master, and what he is doing is entirely for the comfort of the master with no thought for the welfare either of the slave or of society. Pilate's ideal of life is a well-fed body, freedom from discomfort, friends and resources that he can use for the promotion of his own purposes, and no grim or threatening fear to disturb him.

He has a native sense of justice and a dim yearning for truth. They might have made him a true father of his country (*pater patriæ*) if they had been exercised nobly in the realm of a different ideal. As it was, they were held rigidly in the bonds of his selfish and material view of the world and they were unable to do more than flutter occasionally into ineffective expression.

So Pilate is the outstanding example of what is often called "the material mind." We hardly stop to think of his grosser sins, because the complete absorption of his interest and action in the physical here and now is so apparent. Everything follows from this.

On the other hand, Jesus thinks and acts in another world, absolutely different from that of Pilate. He refers everything to a spiritual standard. His own comfort and advantage never are thought of for a moment. He seeks only to promote

one great cause. He is the organizer of the kingdom of spiritual energy, human good-will, and the welfare of the soul. Jesus' world does not ignore Rome; but it puts it in its right relation to the justice and love which it ought to serve. There are no words that can adequately represent what it means to hold the conception that the content of this universe is really spiritual and that God rather than ourselves is the center of it all. As a matter of practical life, we are still living very largely in the old universe of Ptolemy and his astronomy, which set our little earth at the center of the universe.

So when Jesus thinks "kingdom" he has no notion of kings and armies and revenues in the material sense of these words. He is seeing the life of man brought into a reasonable and happy order in which love furnishes the law for conduct, in which all action is unselfish, and the golden rule which he gave is bringing the golden age of which men dream. He dares to maintain that good-will is stronger than all the armies and navies of the world, and that men can be loved and led into high living, but never can be beaten or driven into it.

When Jesus thinks "service," he has in mind no group of cringing slaves giving their lives in order to make a strong man comfortable. He thinks of strong men giving their best in order that weak men may be made stronger. He thinks of every talent and every gift as justifying its possession only through the higher ministry that it can render to the good of all.

It is unfortunate that we must use the word "kingdom" in the effort to interpret Jesus' ideal of life. Perhaps it is set forth better by the term "commonwealth." Its aim is not the establishment of a monarch or a civilization by force, but the attainment of the highest welfare of all in common, the commonwealth of good-will. And this is not gained when political conditions are stable, taxes low, and every factory running on full time. All these conditions may obtain and the commonwealth of good-will may still be far away. Jesus goes beneath all these external conditions, and outlines the creating causes of this desired result. These are found in the motives of men; they exist in the heart. Love and justice and service are the ruling principles of this world-order. There is nothing permanent in mere externals; only God and

goodness endure forever and establish the commonwealth of good-will.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. In what ways in our everyday life do we confuse our sense of values and standards, as the Pharisees did when they kept ceremonially clean while causing the death of Jesus?
2. What is the danger of prejudice in our everyday life?
3. Give other illustrations of the way in which finding a common antagonist will unite former foes.
4. What were the qualities which ought to have commended Jesus to the people as Pilate said, "Behold, the man!" and what were the reasons that led them to cry, "Crucify him"?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

PILATE

1. Selfishly seeking for imperial favor and anxious only that his own interests be promoted.
2. Hating the Jews, scorning their religion, annoyed at their intrusions and demands, ready to "get even" at any cost.
3. The great "neutral," playing fast and loose with his personal responsibility for insisting that justice should be done in Jesus' case.
4. Adroit in personal revenge and clever in the use of sarcasm.
5. A supreme coward.

JESUS

1. Perfectly self-controlled under trial; silent when speech was useless; ready to speak when it was necessary to define or defend the truth.
2. Mocked, abused, and scorned, but never retaliating.
3. Keeping his spiritual ideals and loyalty at the cost of death.
4. Obedient to the will of God in every situation.

CHAPTER XII

Jesus and the Group at the Cross

DAILY READINGS

Twelfth Week, First Day: "The Soldiers"

The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.—John 19: 23, 24.

The crucifixion of a condemned criminal was an operation involving intense physical suffering; but these were rude, harsh times, and the sight of torture and death was frequent and familiar. Human hearts are not made of steel, however; these soldiers must have been moved by some degree of sympathy, although they did their cruel work in accord with their official duty. They had no ill-will toward Jesus personally; they were merely agents of others in what they did.

We surely get into strange mix-ups in balancing official and private duties and relationships. Within the past few years literally millions of men have wounded other millions of men against whom they have had no personal ill-will. They would have been good neighbors and happy friends if they had been free from representative responsibility. But guns were placed in their hands, and they were set to killing one another on account of antagonisms which were national and not individual. We are all under the control of these larger representative responsibilities. One of the most urgent problems in our everyday life is the adjustment of our individual desire and our representative responsibility.

The only way to solve this difficulty is to place life under the control of God's will as Jesus did. War will not cease because soldiers "come out of the trenches," but because reason

and love prevail so generally that men will decide to settle international problems by arbitration rather than by battle. Our supreme duty is to work as soldiers of the common good, to remove crucifixions of every kind from the practice of humanity. This is a campaign which will call for all the resources in reason, wisdom, mutual sympathy, toleration, and patience, that we can possibly muster.

Twelfth Week, Second Day: "The Crowd"

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.—Matt. 27: 39, 40.

The crowd frequented places of execution in those days. The reputation of Jesus undoubtedly made Calvary a center of unusual attraction. The unique title above the cross increased interest. The crowd took up the insulting phrases which would mock the Master most bitterly. As in the case of almost every insult, a perverted truth lay behind the taunt. It was because he was Son of God that he was carrying his life program through to the bitter end; it was because he did have complete power over his life that he was so devoting his body to the will of God. The people did not understand that they were perverting into an insult that which has become in the end the very glory of Jesus.

Very likely there were men in the crowd who had been loudest among the shouters on Palm Sunday. Perhaps there were even those who had personally experienced the Master's gift of health. How strangely fickle is the mind and mood of the mob!

Jesus furnishes us the true principle to guide us in our relation to the crowd. He was sensitive to the appeal of the public. We noted this in his response to the needs of the five thousand who were hungry. He reacted helpfully and quickly to the temper of the people around him.

But it is one thing to appreciate and respond to a popular situation with unselfish service; it is quite another thing to be a time-server with your "ear to the ground," veering with every wind and losing your power of resolute action at the whim of the mob. Jesus gives us a great example of the

right balance between indifference to popular sentiment and bondage to it. *Nothing but clear vision and constant self-control will enable us to keep our individuality and initiative along with our quick response to popular needs.*

Twelfth Week, Third Day: "The Priests"

In like manner also, the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him. He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God.—Matt. 27: 41-43.

The insults of the priests and scribes mingled with those of the crowd. Three phrases in their sarcastic remarks are worthy of note: "he saved others"; "he is the king of Israel"; "he trusteth on God." Study the character of Jesus as it is revealed in these insults of his enemies, and note how unconsciously they paid the highest possible tribute to the Master's life and work.

He saved others—this truly reveals the popular judgment of the centuries. Out of the mouth of his bitterest enemies comes the proof of the beneficent life of Jesus.

He was and is the King of all loyal, loving hearts. We do not think of Israel in the racial, but in the spiritual sense in this connection. Jesus Christ is the true Sovereign of all who are living in vital relations with God.

Jesus trusted God—from the first day of his ministry until his work closed on Calvary, Jesus never let go his hold on his Father. God was the object of his thought, love, and service. He gave himself completely to the Father; he kept back no reserves of affection or loyalty. He was God's man. Complete the picture thus drawn in rugged lines.

The peril of the priesthood is that it degenerates into priestcraft. Unless he fights against it, the man in a place of official religious responsibility tends to become the defender of privilege and the guardian of prejudice, a religious "standpatter." The priests could not understand Jesus. He dared to read new meanings into the sacred law, to compare what had been said to men long ago with what God was now saying through his living lips. This was revolutionary. Jesus re-

garded the healing of a sick man as of more importance than the literal observance of a Sabbath rule which made it a religious crime to carry a burden on that day. He put men in a scale of higher values than sheep. The priests could not get on with it.

There is no more striking warning against religious bigotry than this final meeting of the priests of the old and new covenants on Calvary. These men were earnest, devoted, mistaken bigots, made cruel by the faith that should have made them kind, because they had lost the power of priesthood in the curse of priestcraft. *Beware when officialism usurps the place of the religion of the spirit!*

Twelfth Week, Fourth Day: "The Two Robbers"

And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.—Luke 23: 39-42.

Two robbers were condemned to die in company with the noblest, bravest man that ever lived. It is the most shocking contrast of history.

The first robber joins in the mockery of the crowd and the priests, although his sarcasm takes a different form of expression. He urges Jesus to save himself and his comrades in suffering, on the ground of self-interest. Note how he puts it—"thyself and us." It is a clear and striking picture of the utterly selfish disposition.

The second robber is unlike his comrade. In the hour of his extremity he has turned to God and grown conscious of his guilt. He has no argument against the justice of his condemnation. He presents no excuses, and urges no criticism of his judges. He appeals to Jesus to be remembered in the kingdom of the spirit, into which within a few hours they must come together. The outstanding features of his experience are vividly represented—his sense of God, his consciousness of his sin, and his trust in Christ.

Jesus meets the supreme experience of life with no sense

of sin, and with no rebellion against his Father. He sums it all up in his gracious promise to his penitent comrade: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." To be with Christ evidently means to share his love and spirit, and to be one with him in purpose and service.

Thus three men died on crosses one afternoon on Calvary; but they were practically an infinite distance apart. One robber died with the spirit of rebellion still regnant in him; one robber died with the gleam of a divine promise shining before him; Jesus died, the Son of God, triumphant over pain.

Twelfth Week, Fifth Day: "Mary"

These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.—John 19: 25-27.

Why did not these women keep away from the spectacle of human pain which those crosses presented? Mothers never do this when their children are in trouble. Mary and her friends were as close to the cross as they could come, where they might give any possible courage or comfort to the beloved sufferer.

And Mary's devotion to Jesus was matched by his care for her. He saw her in spite of his pain, and he thought of her welfare more than he did of his own anguish. It is an exquisite touch in the life of Jesus, revealing the tenderness and loyalty of his devotion to his mother.

There is no more delicate touchstone to determine the worth of character than loyalty to father and mother. The man who forgets his mother, the woman who is careless regarding her father, betrays a fatal weakness in character. Boys and girls pass through a time of carelessness in their development, when they are likely to forget to be thoughtful and affectionate to their parents. Mothers sometimes suffer deeply as they see their boys break off their old confiding habits and grow distant, unresponsive, and sometimes even brutally unmindful

of the old affectionate expressions of childhood. It is a hard time for the boy also. His apparent coldness is generally not such; in his heart he is as loving and loyal as he ever was. The old ways of expressing his love, however, seem childish and unreal, so he is silent and reserved. He needs love and patience and sympathy.

This scene on Calvary is a revelation of the true relations between a mother and her son. How long since you wrote your mother the kind of a love letter that causes you a little choke in the throat? How long since you kissed your father and told him that never a day goes by without your thanking him in your heart for what he has done for you? *Do not be afraid of sentiment.* It is the most manly, womanly act possible to give our parents the devotion of our hearts with unreserved expression.

Twelfth Week, Sixth Day: "The Centurion"

And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.—Mark 15: 39.

The centurion who commanded the detail of soldiers entrusted with the execution of Jesus had doubtless seen many a death under similar circumstances. There is a graphic quality in the simple words, "stood by over against him." One can almost see the sturdy figure of the mail-clad officer with his arms folded across his chest, strongly poised on his feet, watching the scene to the end.

"Socrates died like a philosopher; Jesus Christ like a God." There must have been something in the majesty of the end which brought home to the centurion's mind and heart the true character of Jesus on the cross. Exactly what the Roman captain meant by the term, the "Son of God" we may not be able to tell, but surely it was the ascription to Jesus of a character which is in every way adequate to these exalted words.

We do not get the impression of Jesus from the New Testament as a pale "man of sorrows." He is a carpenter, with a physical body so well developed that he is able to meet the terrific strain of his active ministry, and of the last week of his earthly life without collapse. He lives normally, in

healthy fashion. He is a welcome guest at a feast and in a home.

Have we come into a place of thoughtful observation where we have watched Jesus as closely as this centurion did? Does it seem to you that you would like to be the kind of a person that Jesus was? Our thought about Christ is more than our theology; it is the definition of our personal duty and the standard of our daily living. One may have the highest doctrinal ideas about Christ, and yet miss the practical use of them as standards of action in everyday life. We must make good with our doctrines about him by living a Christ-like life.

Twelfth Week, Seventh Day: "The Friends Afar Off"

And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed with him from Galilee, stood afar off, seeing these things. —Luke 23: 49.

Here we discern the most distant friendly circle in the group about the cross. Jesus was in the hands of the Roman officers, and no help could reach him on the cross. So the group of distant friends stood in a condition of balance between the centripetal force of love drawing them toward their Master, and the centrifugal force of sorrow driving them away from the agony of his death. What did they talk about as they watched and waited for the end? Did some of them expect that a miracle might still take place, and that the heavenly hosts would rescue their Lord and inaugurate the divine kingdom of love and good will? There they stand, unable to help, unwilling to go away.

This group in the distance around the cross stands for that great circle of "his acquaintance" who follow a master whom they do not quite understand, and want to be counted for a cause that they hardly quite dare openly to champion. They are in every college and church and community. They are just far enough from the center so that they do not count. They lack the affirmative mood.

In these years when men have been suffering and dying by the millions for their native land and their ideal of freedom, those who bear the Christian name must not be less

positively loyal and brave. We belong among those who stand at the very center of loyal service to Jesus Christ. Out on the distant margin of the scene gather the reluctant and timid souls. Our place is not there.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

It is impossible not to wonder what may have been the influence of the seamless coat of Jesus which one of the soldiers was successful in winning. Did the owner remember how the man who had formerly worn it died? May we suppose that, through the silent influence of this memory, he some time later became convinced that Jesus was more than a condemned criminal and made the great decision to follow Christ? It is only a fancy, but surely it is not an idle one.

The fine quality of the Master's friendship for John appears in the study this week. We often test friendship by the service that it is glad to render. But there is another way in which to prove its worth. It is a true mark of friendship when one is ready not only to give something, but also to ask that something be given. Many a friend carries his loyalty so far that he is ready to give his best to his comrade; but is he also ready to ask his friend to make a sacrifice for him? There could be no finer proof of Jesus' love for John than the fact that he asked John to take upon himself the care of Mary. We sometimes test our loyalty to Christ by asking if we are ready to do something for him; are we also willing, in complete confidence, to let him do something for us?

The study is full of suggestions concerning the way in which personal desires and acts are changed by official and representative responsibility. The centurion, the soldiers, the priests, and many in the crowd did at the cross officially or under the sway of the mob what they never would have done if they had been dealing with Jesus as man to man. It is hardly possible to think of any normal man who would deliberately nail the body of another to a cross; if these priests and citizens who shouted their insults to the silent Sufferer on the cross had met Jesus quietly and walked with him through the fields, the majority of them would have felt that they might fairly be called his friends and they would have parted in utmost good will. For when two people with

honest hearts free from prejudice meet each other with nothing to divide them, each generally respects and soon likes the other. But it is the crowd and the official point of view that come in to break the natural kindness of our relations with one another. One of the most difficult situations that we have to manage is the keeping of ourselves free from the prejudices which arise because we are really not our individual selves in our dealings with others; we are ourselves *plus* some official responsibility or vested interest or traditional pre-judgment. Why cannot we, as simple and friendly human beings, deal with each other according to the elementary principles of good-will and justice and mercy? As a matter of fact we do not; and so much are we a part of the past, so much do we receive from training and our immediate surroundings, that we seldom if ever meet one another in this way. No fellow-man or group of fellow-men, acting according to the finest instincts of their souls, sent Jesus to the cross. It was mob judgment and official or representative zeal which did it. Above all, therefore, let us try to rid ourselves of the shackles of custom and bondage to external standards, and do our best to deal with one another according to the fundamental principles of mutual respect and kindness.

Another item worth careful study is the power of a brave consistent life to convince men of the truth that it represents. We know nothing of the education or mental gifts of the centurion. He may have been at home in philosophy and the religious discussions of the day. But the force that made the indelible impression upon his mind was the heroic life and death of Jesus. He saw how the robbers died; he saw Jesus meet the supreme experience of human life. He knew that the Master had something which he never had seen before in the case of a dying man. He did not stop for definitions. He knew that Jesus had died in the way that God would want a man to pass out of his mortal life. He reasoned instantly to the conclusion that only a man whose life purposes were at one with those of God could do this. So out of his observation and intuitive reasoning on the matter he framed his proposition. He was sure that this man must be the true Son of God. It was the life and death of Jesus which created the doctrine about him.

If only we might force ourselves through all the words

that have been spoken about Jesus to the very presence of the Master himself, we too would surely find the truth that all the creeds have been struggling to express and which the centurion put into words. We would be able to understand then how it was the real life and character of Jesus which gave origin to all the teachings about him. And we would be saved from the danger of getting the theory into the place of the fact. We would discover Jesus as he walked with his disciples, talked with his friends, and finally died on the cross. The moral and spiritual beauty of his character would be seen as the outgrowth of his real, his utterly genuine life. Then we should truly meet the Master ourselves as the men of his day knew and loved him.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. How does war and the martial spirit tend to lower regard for human life?
2. Does official responsibility tend to make one conservative? Why? How is this especially true in religion? Give examples.
3. How does loyalty to father and mother test character?
4. What is the permanent attractiveness in the cross of Christ?

OUTLINE SKETCHES

THE SOLDIERS

1. Trained in the school of heartless warfare. Coarse and harsh; yet doubtless with human sympathies beneath rough exteriors.
2. Dividing the "rake-off" which fell to them and prudent in disposing of the most valuable part.

THE CROWD

1. Its changeful temper.
2. Its biting scorn.
3. Its merciless demands.

THE PRIESTS

1. Genuinely zealous for religion, perverted by their officialism.
2. Blinded as to the real values of life by their bigotry.

THE ROBBERS

1. Receiving the just penalty of their crimes.
2. One made hard, the other penitent, by suffering.

MARY AND JOHN

1. The suffering mother, close to the cross.
2. The object of Jesus' love and tender care.
3. The loyal disciple taking a son's place.

THE CENTURION

1. A typical Roman officer, experienced, calculating, cold.
2. Responding to an example of true spiritual loyalty with an honest confession of conviction.

THE FRIENDS AFAR OFF

1. Unable to help and forced to watch what they could not prevent.

JESUS

1. The Victim of intense physical suffering.
2. Loving his own unto the end.
3. Forgiving the penitent even at the end of his life.
4. Meeting in silence the insults of the crowd.
5. Enduring without reply the sneers of the priests.
6. The suffering and divine Redeemer.

CHAPTER XIII

Jesus the Man and the Master

The purpose of this final study is to present, not only from the scenes and teachings which we have passed in review during the preceding twelve lessons, but also from other sources in the gospels, an outline sketch of the character of Jesus. Throughout the study we shall be guided by our sense of the vitality in Jesus. That is, our point of view is not primarily what the Christian Church has said about Jesus; we wish to make objectively vivid and attractive that real person, Jesus of Nazareth, who asked men and women to become his friends, learn the secret of his life, and finally embody his master motives in those purposes from which they would act habitually in their daily life. It is a genuine man, doing his work in the world and living his life among his comrades, whom we shall now attempt to bring before our minds.

DAILY READINGS

Thirteenth Week, First Day: "The Physical Fitness of Jesus"

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves to seize me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but this is done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. And they all left him, and fled.—Mark 14: 48-50.

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, The place of a skull, they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall; and when he had tasted it, he would not drink.—Matt. 27: 33, 34.

There is relatively little in the New Testament by which we can determine the physical health or habits of Jesus. What we gather comes incidentally from the narratives. The impression is clear, however, that Jesus possessed a body that was unimpaired by any vicious habits. He had apparently

been trained in physical labor, and he was able to endure the strain of his intense public life without breaking down at any point.

Our passages today show him in two situations: first, enduring the mill of nerve-racking work day after day, and, second, meeting a crisis in such perfect composure that the effect of it was practically overwhelming to those who had been sent to arrest him. He could not have endured the nervous strain of daily teaching, or have passed through the physical trial of his last week, unless he had been physically fit for the ordeal.

The second passage shows Jesus at the critical moment when his executioners were about to place him on the cross, refusing to take the wine and bitter herbs which would dull his sensibilities and act as a mild anæsthetic. He was ready to meet the last mortal experience with his physical powers unimpaired by a drug. He knew what he could do with his body, and what his body would do for him. He could trust his own nerves. In the language of St. Francis, he had faith in the steadfastness of "Brother Body."

The question often has been raised as to whether the body helps the spirit more than the spirit helps the body. Actually each is necessary to the other so far as the efficiency of our everyday life is concerned. Neither can be ignored without the other suffering. There has been a tendency in some forms of Christian teaching to disparage the physical, but this receives no warrant from Jesus. He brought his religion to bear directly upon his physical organism. He did not worry, and thereby throw his physical functions in disorder. He lost no sleep through fear. He was able to sleep in a boat when a storm was whipping the lake into fury. We shall be able to work longer hours in a calmer mood when we take Jesus' attitude toward God. Does your religion give you more power to control your nerves? *Would the fact that you are a Christian make you a better risk to a life insurance company?*

Thirteenth Week, Second Day: "The Self-Control of Jesus"

And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face

to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village.—Luke 9: 51-56.

It is not easy to attain complete self-mastery in a situation where one is receiving personal insult. Jesus had experienced the hatred and sarcasm of a Samaritan; but he had conquered by his good-will and patience. (See Chapter II.) Now he meets another case of religious hatred and bigotry. Hospitality was a fundamental Oriental virtue and Jesus had the right to expect that his reasonable request would be fairly met. And probably it would have been if it had not appeared that he was a Jew on his way to Jerusalem. That settled the matter. The people in the village closed their doors against him.

The impetuous disciples lost their temper in a moment. They remembered what their sacred books said about the action of Elijah under similar circumstances. (See II Kings 1: 10-12.) But Jesus had himself completely in hand. He would not answer in kind. He rebuked the disciples for their spirit of revenge. The margin contains an interesting addition that is found in many old texts. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," he is reported to have said to them. They did not understand the greater strength which led Jesus to pass on quietly and kindly to the next town, where he might find a place to rest his tired body.

One reason why so many Christians lose out at critical moments is because they cannot control themselves under the circumstances. The moment anyone makes you hate him and thus become vindictive, he has proven himself stronger than you. For to hate or despise anyone is to let yourself escape the firm control of love and good-will; therefore, it is to become gradually weakened and finally defeated. Our religion must bring us constant help in mastering ourselves. To lose one's temper, to display a vindictive spirit, to go to pieces in a practical situation, is to fail to realize the power of the Christian ideal.

When we are ruled by the spirit of Christ we are enabled to control our passions and to master ourselves as he did. The world judges us with instant accuracy in this respect, and pronounces its judgment relentlessly. We may be loud in our expressions of personal loyalty to Christ; but unless we bring ourselves under the sway of Jesus' motive of love, we shall never convince our fellows that we are his disciples. Christ can help us rule our spirits. He will make us our own masters if we will work with him to that end.

Thirteenth Week, Third Day: "The Sincerity of Jesus"

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath day. And behold, a woman that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, answered and said to the multitude, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath. But the Lord answered him, and said, Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath? And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame: and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.—Luke 13: 10-17.

It is difficult to imagine a religious custom so stupidly illogical as that displayed by the ruler of the synagogue. The patiently suffering woman had been bent over with her disease for eighteen years. Jesus had spoken the words which had helped her. The ruler of the synagogue could say nothing against the fact of her cure; but he was highly indignant at the time it was accomplished. It was the Sabbath day, sacred to the worship of Jehovah, and consecrated to the

ceremonies of religion. Jesus had not seemed to regard this fact duly. He cured the woman on the sacred day.

Of course he did. Jesus was so utterly sincere and consistent in his thought and practice that he could not endure the stupid complications of a legal and ceremonial religion. It was necessary in the nature of the case to permit the watering of cattle on the Sabbath. Here was a woman in the clutch of disease. How much more she was worth than an ox! As a matter of duty and privilege, her cure was more important than the watering of all the cattle in Palestine.

How fine it is to see a courageous man break through the foolishness and inconsistency of conventional standards and go straight to the center of a moral and religious situation by the insight of a perfectly sincere spirit. Jesus always was doing this. His logic was invincible because his soul was utterly sincere.

The word "sincerity" may get its primitive meaning from the custom of finishing wood by the means of wax in such a way that it would appear to be what it was not. Wood, which was not treated thus and so appeared exactly what it was, was called "without wax" (*sine cera*) or sincere. So the quality of sincerity in human character is simple genuineness with nothing to mask it or give it a false appearance. It is rugged honesty. It is freedom from artifice, pretence, sham, or cant of any kind.

Religious thought and life are most susceptible to the vice of insincerity. Pretence may be used for a long time to cover up motives which are false. In the end, however, it is utterly fatal. The moral masters of mankind have known that their cause would be lost if they played fast and loose with truth. Let us suffer no sham to find a place in our everyday living. Let us put the wholesome sincerity of Jesus at the very center of our motives.

Thirteenth Week, Fourth Day: "The Tenderness of Jesus"

But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by

chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.—Luke 10: 29-37.

The story with which Jesus answered the somewhat captious question of the lawyer, "And who is my neighbor?" is so familiar and its lesson so obvious that comment is unnecessary. It expresses with consummate clarity the tenderness of Jesus and his instinctive response to human need of every kind.

Jesus had almost a sixth sense; it was his power to discern the needs of those whom he met and to help them practically. An expert sociologist was once described as a man who had a "social nose." So Jesus detected the fundamental and elementary needs of men with an inerrant instinct. If we seek the explanation of this, we shall find that it consists in his sincere and constant love.

The parable brings out the point that it was a person whom he naturally would have disliked to whom the Samaritan showed kindness. It is easy to be "nice" to those who are our own kind and belong in our set. The real test of kindness comes when its object would be naturally somewhat forbidding instead of inviting.

Contact with life, especially in its more superficial and harder aspects, has an inevitable tendency to dull one's sensitiveness and dry up the native springs of pity. It was put into bitter words by the brilliant Frenchwoman: "The more I know of men, the better I like dogs." Jesus is the great example that rebukes this miserable mood. He never failed to respond with sympathy and help, when he came into contact with a human need.

To be so highly educated that the sight of ignorance evokes only contempt; to be so strong that contact with weakness calls forth no deep desire to help; to lose the power of moral indignation in the presence of sin is to miss the control of the Master's passion of tenderness. When Lincoln saw the slave market for the first time his young soul revolted with the true Christian reaction. He determined on the spot that if ever he had the chance to hit that evil thing, he would hit it hard. The Russian lady who wept in the warm theater at the death of a stage hero while her coachman froze to death on the box waiting outside, had not learned the secret of Christian tenderness.

True tenderness, therefore, may often take the form of passionate moral indignation. It is pity for that which is suffering the final results of evil which inspires the reformer to attack. Is our religion making us compassionate, both to save and to reform?

Thirteenth Week, Fifth Day: "The Severity of Jesus"

But woe unto you Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over justice and the love of God: but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you Pharisees! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces. Woe unto you! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not.—Luke 11: 42-44.

From the gentleness to the severity of Jesus seems a difficult transition. Are they consistent in the same character? Or are they contradictory? The answer lies in a study of the circumstances. It was the censorious and bigoted Pharisees against whom Jesus used some of the severest words ever spoken by human lips. For repentant moral transgressors and degraded men and women who yet yearned for God and truth, Jesus had only gracious words and genuine pardon. But for men who posed as religious leaders, and yet were cruel and bigoted, Jesus had only the severest censure. This does not show any lack of love on his part. Severity under these circumstances is the inevitable result of love. The love

for truth blazing in the heart of a champion determines the severity with which he will deal with the foes of his cause.

The balance of these two tempers is a practical problem. When and how far shall each be permitted to find expression? Jesus is the great example of the right adjustment of these two moods. To show tenderness for all sinning, suffering, responsive souls and severity towards all formal, bigoted, unloving souls—this is the right way in which to be both kind and severe.

Our modern life needs the restoration of such convictions and affections as will make it capable of sterner antagonisms than it is now. We need to love the good more, in order that we may be stronger haters of the evil. When the forces of sin break loose in the community and destroy the most valuable possessions we have, does religious conviction rise in holy wrath and drive the intruders and destroyers out? Perhaps it is not our wealth that is being destroyed; our children may be safe. But that does not make it none of our business. Who cleansed the temple? So far as we know Christ had not been robbed personally. But others were being robbed and that made it his business. The woman who had just paid too much for the pair of doves intended as her offering was suffering; and Jesus suffered with her.

What is our attitude, therefore, in face of the influences in the community that demand reform or expulsion? Dare a Christian try to remain neutral and silent? Can the community count on the Christian forces to be severe with the sin that is eating out its life?

Thirteenth Week, Sixth Day: "The Loyalty of Jesus"

And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came again and found

them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words.—Matt. 26: 39-44.

Three times in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus proved his loyalty to the will of God. There are few passages in the Bible more pathetic than the Master's words, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus loved life as much as any man who ever lived. The stars in the sky were beautiful to him, the wind from the hills was sweet, and the laughter of little children was music. Jesus did not want to give these up any more than any strong man at thirty-three would be ready to surrender them all without a regret. Gethsemane meant real struggle and sacrifice.

But Jesus had set out to do one thing in this world, namely, to follow the will of God to the limit, wherever it should lead him and whatever it should cost. He felt that a divine purpose was calling him to prove even in the bitter last experience of physical death that his ideal would "work." He never could show the world the meaning of God's Fatherhood and prove what it means to be a Son of the Father without going loyally all the way to Calvary. So he prayed that he might be free from the experience if it were possible, but for loyalty to carry him through to the end if he must do it. The first item in the prayer was not answered. The second was. Jesus was kept steadfast to the moment of his death. And so he becomes our perfect example and Master through his loyalty to the Father.

This simple word loyalty gathers up in a concise way the central fact in religion. It means simple trustworthiness and abiding devotion. Our Christian life rests in loyalty to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in loyalty to Christ himself as our Master, and then, as a consequence, in loyalty to our own highest Christian ideal and to one another as brothers in the commonwealth of good will.

Test the application of your religion to the fact of everyday life according to this standard. Did your religion make you a more reliable worker yesterday? Can you be trusted more implicitly by your fellowmen because you are a Christian? When the community makes an inventory of those upon whom they may surely count for the common good, is your name in the list?

Thirteenth Week, Seventh Day: "The Majesty of Jesus"

In that very hour there came certain Pharisees, saying to him, Get thee out, and go hence: for Herod would fain kill thee. And he said unto them, Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected. Nevertheless I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!—Luke 13: 31-34.

Every reader of the gospels will select such particular passages as seem to him best to express the majesty of Jesus' character. In choosing the passage for today we have thought that no finer expression of his greatness could be found than this disclosure of his steadfast purpose and high sense of mission.

Following the marginal reading, we paraphrase the passage thus: "I do my God-given work today and tomorrow, and the third day I end my course. Nevertheless I go on my way, today and tomorrow, and the day following." What could be more majestic, more lofty, more sacred, than a life that is thus divinely mastered, determined to go on, doing that which is God's will, undistracted and undeterred by anything that the days can bring or men can do? This is the very essence of heroism. This is the supreme elevation of human character. On such a level the life of a man moves among those serene heights which are radiant and sublime.

In this wonderful statement of his purpose—a passage which is not often read and therefore is somewhat unfamiliar—the Master stands forth in the sublimity and simplicity of his dedicated and beneficent life. The vision which we catch of his character in these words is like the summits of the Alps flushed with morning splendor. Jesus is majestic and divine in such a moment of self-discovery.

Jesus is simply too great to be ignored in the personal life of any thoughtful man or woman. We cannot omit hunger,

we cannot leave out the stars, we cannot pass by love, and we cannot ignore Jesus Christ, when we try to give an account of the universe in which we live. Sometimes a student or a busy man or woman in the midst of a crowded life tries to avoid the challenge of the world's moral and spiritual Master. But one cannot do it and be fair to all the facts. Jesus Christ is at the center of the life that we are all trying to live, with a claim that cannot be ignored. Sooner or later we must reckon with it. It is a supreme question. No other test goes so surely and with such searching power to the very heart of our everyday life as this, "What are you doing with Jesus Christ?" This majestic Master stands at the door of the soul and demands under the conditions of modern life as never before the recognition of his claim and the full loyalty of our souls to his personal leadership.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

In gathering up the impressions of the studies which we have been making, we shall seek in conclusion an answer to this practical question: *What may Jesus Christ mean as a source of power to anyone living in the everyday relations of the modern world?* We are not concerned with theories about Christ, except as they become the means through which we are really equipped with power. It is practical energy for right living that we are seeking.

Jesus Christ furnishes us our workable idea of God. The God that Jesus had is the God whom we too may have. In every experience that comes to us, we need only to look at the way Jesus met a similar event in his life. Then we find that he never lost his hold on God as the power that enabled him to meet it courageously and victoriously. The God that was real to Jesus is the God who will be real to us, if we will act as Jesus did in the corresponding experience. For God was real to the Master always; therefore God will be real to us now. There is tremendous power in this if once we make it a rule of life. It brings God into our conscious life as its central fact.

Jesus Christ furnishes us the true interpretation of the world in which we are living. Before we shall ever be able to manage the business of living well, we must make sure that it is worth while. There have been countless interpretations

of the meaning of human life; but there is just one that is altogether discriminating and true. Jesus had the right idea of what it means to live. He understood the significance of the passing world of material forms and the enduring world of spiritual reality. He set that which was of most importance in the center of his habitual activities. When we get this idea of the true value and meaning of life, new power comes into our daily living. We are sure that it is worth while. There are no tasks without meaning and no real duties that are not divine in their significance.

Then Jesus put its true value upon human life. He never confused the personal and eternal with the material and the perishing. It is impossible to be a follower of Jesus and scorn any human life as lacking in interest. Little children and cripples are worth more than all the wealth of the mines. A budding affection and a swelling hope are more significant than all the verdure of the fields; Jesus said this to his disciples at Jacob's well. Bumper crops and crammed elevators make a great showing in the activities of Wall Street; but they are far less important than the ideals of the people and the justice that underlies the economic system of a nation. The power and speed of the great limousine whirling into a cloud of dust is far less significant than the quality of the young man who holds the steering wheel. Unless he is trustworthy, the beautiful car may be only an engine of destruction to innocent people. The real values of life are personal, not physical.

Then Jesus shows us what we ought to be ready to do with our own lives. It takes nothing from his character and mission when we say that the highest personal ideal for every individual is to do with his gifts and powers something similar to that which Jesus did with his. He sends his disciples into the world in order that they may do, each in his own way and with his own energies, that which Jesus himself did. How could there be a clearer definition of life's master-purpose than this? And when once we catch the vision of such a life, new strength and courage come to us for the day's work. It is impossible to get great results in noble living out of low moods and small ideals. But think of trying to do something worth while in the world as Christ's representative! The very idea releases energies that we did not know we possessed. We can afford to be patient and work hard. We can meet

whatever may come with the faith that carried Jesus past Calvary, for we also know that God is with us. This is not a mere theory or groundless vision. Millions of our fellows have tried it and made good with it. This is what changed Simon into Peter and made a mighty believer out of Thomas.

And Jesus shows us that there are certain great forces at work in this universe that cannot be defeated. Death cannot destroy them and enemies cannot frustrate them. It is a superb assurance to feel thrilling through one's being that he is "doing his bit" on the side of the conquering forces. The midnight may shut down upon the battle lines; we may "fight with the scabbard when the sword is broke"; but finally the battle turns to the side of Christ.

Everyone wants his life to count with the truth and the right. But these words are only synonyms for Christ. He is winning the campaign, despite the failure of an occasional skirmish and the loss of a battle now and then. To be sure of this is to get real strength for victorious li[illegible]g.

Instead of being hard for the modern man to understand and follow Christ, never was it so easy to appreciate him and yield to his claims. He lived and died to show us the Father, to reveal the meaning of life, to define our normal course of duty, and to give us help to follow in his way. To be loyal to him is to win; to follow him is to be free.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND STUDY

1. In what way ought the Christian life to influence sound physical health?

2. Name some of the most insinuating temptations to insincerity. How large a place does it occupy in modern social life?

3. What conditions in modern life tend to make men harsh and unmerciful? What are some of the present day parallels to the experience of the man on the Jericho road?

4. In what ways does modern life test loyalty to Christ?

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